

## **SHQ 2U Community Consultation**

### **Authors:**

Nicola Hofler<sup>1</sup>, Francis Townsend<sup>1</sup>, Mariana Galrao<sup>1</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Sexual Health Quarters

### **Background/Purpose:**

Cervical cancer is preventable and curable if detected early. The national cervical cancer screening program invites eligible people to participate in this free program, every 5 years, enabling early detection of cervical changes requiring treatment, thereby reducing the risk of cancer. However, it is estimated that only about one third of people with a disability who are eligible, participate in the program. Low participation has been attributed to barriers faced by people with a disability, such as inaccessible services, stigma, and poor communication with health professionals. Sexual Health Quarters is seeking to co-design the ideal cervical screening program with and for people with disability

### **Approach:**

Between March and August 2025, SHQ consulted with 98 individuals with disability, 11 carers of people with disability and 18 service providers, to explore barriers and enablers of participation in cervical screening and the components for the ideal model of care. Data were collected via surveys, interviews, and focus groups, and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

### **Outcomes/Impact:**

Three key themes emerged: 1) previous experiences with cervical screening tests; 2) knowledge of importance of screening; 3) 14 recommendations for an ideal model of care – including home-based/outreach model, trauma-aware, person-centred care; flexibility in appointment location; use of accessible and inclusive communication; female clinicians; interpreter availability; and allowance for support persons during procedures, among others.

### **Innovation and Significance:**

The findings indicate strong recommendation for an outreach service, provided it is designed around individual needs and community preferences. This consultation represents the first stage of a co-designed program and offers practical guidance for developing equitable and scalable cervical screening services for people with disability.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interests