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Monday 8 May 2006

## **REMINDER FOR WOMEN ON PAP SMEARS**

South Australian women are being reminded to “don’t just sit there” at the start of Pap Smear Awareness Week.

Health Minister John Hill is urging women who have failed to have a Pap smear in the past two years to book in for the test.

“South Australian women have one of the highest participation rates in the country, with 65.1% of SA women taking part in screening programs in 2003-04, compared to the national participation rate of 60.7%,” he said.

“But that means around one third of South Australian women may be unnecessarily putting their lives at risk by not having a Pap smear test every two years as recommended.

“Australia has the lowest mortality rate for cervical cancer in the world, at around 2 per 100,000 women, largely thanks to the Pap smear screening program, but there is still room for improvement.”

Associate Professor Margaret Davy, the Director of Gynaecological Oncology at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, said more than 90% of cervix cancers were preventable with regular screening.

“Pap smears can detect early and small changes in the cells of the cervix, which can then be treated,” she said.

“The “don’t just sit there” advertising campaign for Pap Smear Awareness week urges women to take action and see their GP or service provider as soon as possible.”

The Health Department’s *Cancer in South Australia 2003* report shows the incidence of cervix cancer in SA has fallen by about 40% in the last 25 years largely because of the early detection and treatment through screening programs.

“The mortality rates in South Australia have also reduced by almost 70% in the last 25 years,” Minister Hill said.

“These are pleasing results, but the report also indicates 46 new cases of cervical cancer were diagnosed in 2003, and there were 24 deaths from cervix cancer in the same year.

“I urge all women aged between 20 and 69 years to take heed of the screening message.”