

Wimmera cervical screening rates: region among the state's lowest | Graph

By ERIN McFADDEN

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The Grampians region recorded one of the lowest rates of regular pap tests in Victoria.

WOMEN'S Health Grampians believes Wimmera women are putting themselves at risk of cervical cancer by failing to have regular pap tests.

New figures from the Victorian Cervical Cytology Registry show Northern Grampians Shire has the lowest pap screening rates for 2013-14 in regional Victoria, with only 51 per cent of women getting regular tests.

Grampians also recorded one of the lowest rates in Victoria at 56.4 per cent.

All Wimmera local government areas had screening rates lower than the state average of 60 per cent.

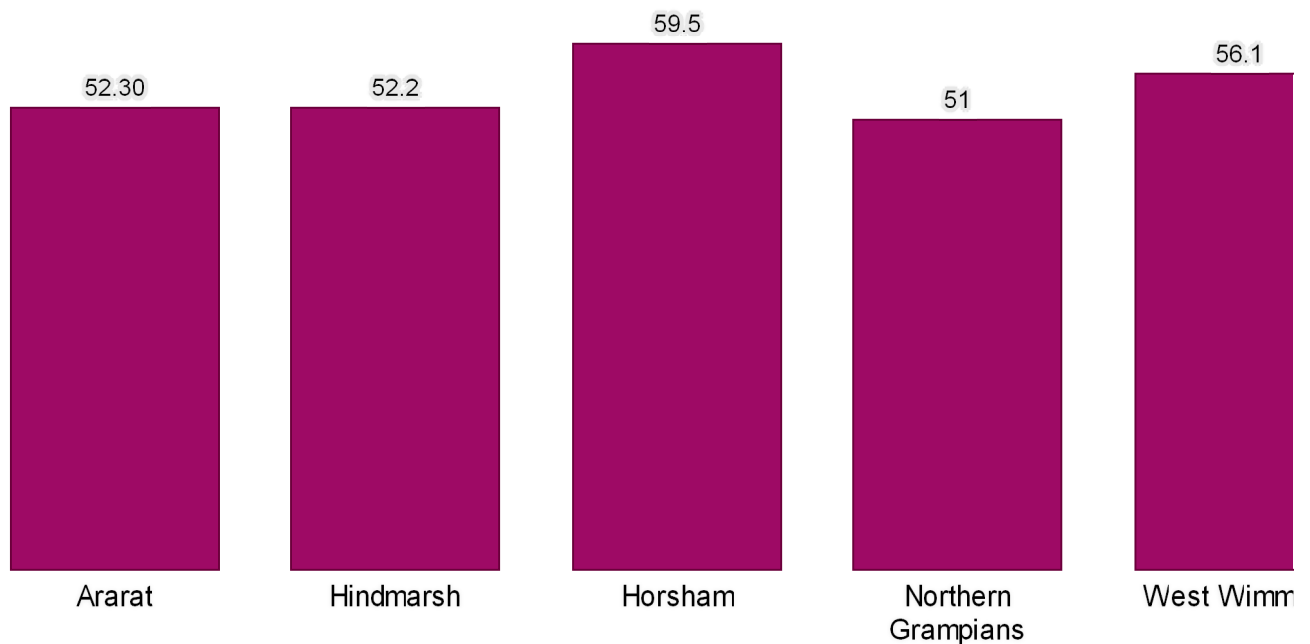
Women's Health Grampians chief executive Marianne Hendron said the figures were disappointing.

"It is concerning there has been a drop in the number of people getting regularly screened," she said. "Hindmarsh, Horsham and Northern Grampians municipalities have all dropped two or three per cent."

Hindmarsh recorded a rate of 52.2 per cent, Ararat recorded 52.3 per cent, Yarriambiack recorded 55.1 per cent, West Wimmera recorded 56.1 per cent and Horsham recorded 59.5 per cent.

Cervical screening statistics in the Wimmera

Percentage of women screened in 2013-14



Source: Victorian Cervical Cytology Registry

Ms Hendron said the low figures was something the organisation had highlighted with the state government.

She said regional women were disadvantaged because there were less sexual and reproductive health services available.

“If a young women isn’t comfortable seeing her general practitioner, there are no other options,” she said.

“We don’t have free clinics, but nurses are qualified to do pap tests as well, which some people don’t realise.”

Ms Hendron said there also needed to be more education available for women.

“The state government has recognised sexual and reproductive health as a priority issue, which is good, but compared with other public health issues, such as obesity, there are no policy or strategies in place,” she said. “These statistics show us this is a real problem. It’s not just pap tests, but there are other issues such as high rates of chlamydia and high birth rates among young people.”

Ms Hendron said Women’s Health Grampians would work with Family Planning Victoria to roll out more training for practitioners throughout the region.

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