

Cairns Public Health Unit

Monthly surveillance update – August 2026

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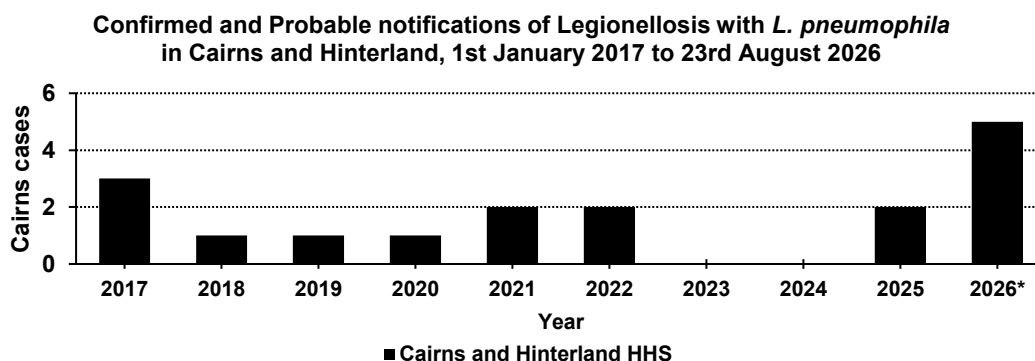
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Gonorrhoea and Infectious Syphilis Outbreak in Cairns

- Cairns Public Health Unit and partner organisations are responding to a localised infectious syphilis and gonorrhoea outbreak, especially impacting the Cairns urban area.
- Notifications of gonorrhoea and infectious syphilis have increased in the Cairns and Hinterland HHS region from mid-2025, with elevated activity continuing into 2026.
- Notifications are particularly high among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) but have also increased among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including women of childbearing age.
- A case of congenital syphilis was diagnosed earlier this year, the first reported in CHHHS since 2022.
- **Clinicians are encouraged to maintain a high index of suspicion, offer appropriate STI testing based on clinical and sexual history, and ensure timely treatment and partner notification.**
- Particular attention should be given to STI screening in people at increased risk, including GBMSM and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, and antenatal screening to prevent congenital syphilis.

Legionella pneumophila – Increased Activity in 2026

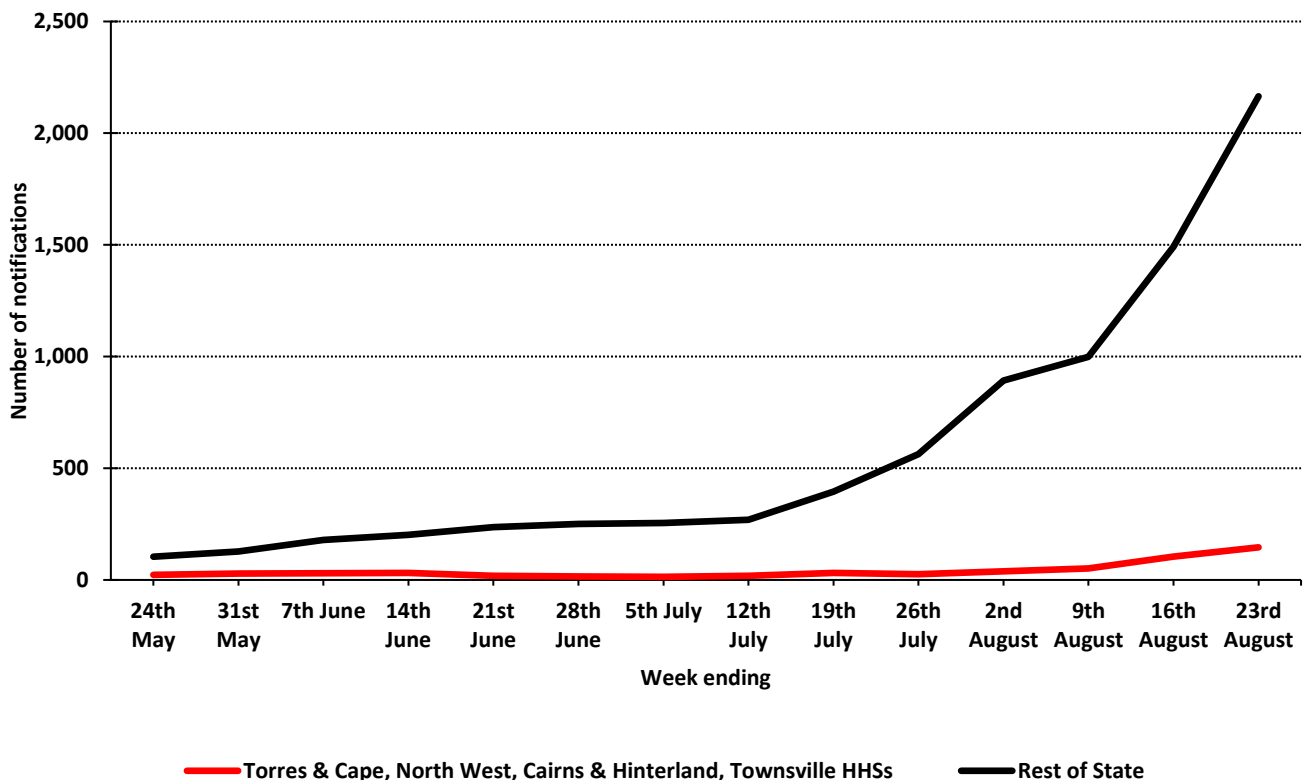
- 2026 has recorded the highest number of notified *Legionella pneumophila* cases in the CHHHS region in the past 10 years, with 5 cases reported to date. No common exposures between cases have been identified to date.
- Legionella bacteria are naturally found in aquatic habitats and soils and can thrive in warm water associated with cooling and warm water systems. It is found extensively in the environment, and many people are exposed without developing disease.
- **Although legionella remains rare, clinicians are encouraged to consider Legionnaires' disease in the differential diagnosis of severe or atypical community-acquired pneumonia.**
- Clinical features may include fever, cough, shortness of breath and pneumonia, with some patients also experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhoea, nausea or abdominal pain.
- Urinary antigen testing provides rapid diagnosis of *L. pneumophila* serogroup 1 infection, while respiratory specimens for culture and/or molecular testing can assist with diagnosis and public health investigation.



Influenza Activity Increasing Across Queensland

- Weekly influenza case numbers are increasing rapidly across many other Queensland HHS regions, suggesting that seasonal influenza activity is becoming established across the state.
- Activity in the Cairns and Hinterland HHS (CHHHS) area remains relatively low compared with other parts of the state, although an upward trend is beginning to emerge.
- GPs and other primary care providers are encouraged to consider influenza in patients presenting with compatible acute respiratory illness, particularly those at increased risk of severe disease.
- **Please continue to promote seasonal influenza vaccination particularly, for priority cohorts including residents of aged care homes.**

Laboratory-confirmed influenza notifications for Queensland residents, split by grouped HHS of residence, 18th May to 23rd August 2026



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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