

Cairns Public Health Unit

Monthly surveillance update – September 2026

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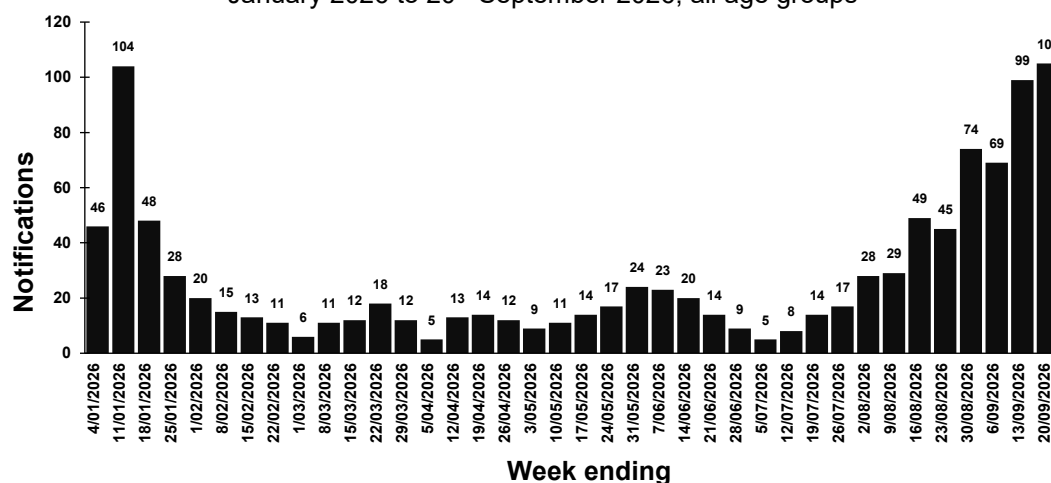
Gonorrhoea and Syphilis outbreak update

- Cairns Public Health Unit and partner organisations are continuing to respond to a localised infectious syphilis and gonorrhoea outbreak, especially impacting the Cairns urban area.
- Notifications of these conditions increased in the Cairns and Hinterland HHS region from mid-2025, and have remained elevated throughout 2026, compared to recent previous years.
- 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 contact tracing.**
- Particular attention should be given to STI screening and prevention among populations at increased risk, including gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Continued emphasis on antenatal screening, timely diagnosis and treatment of syphilis during pregnancy is important to reduce the risk of congenital syphilis.

Influenza activity continues to rise

- Cases of influenza continue to increase in September, with a total of 262 notifications as of 20th September, compared to 217 for the month of August.
- In the most recent week (ending 20th September 2026), the highest weekly count of influenza notifications for the year was reached (105), surpassing the 104 observed in Week 2 of 2026, following peak influenza activity late 2025.
- While peak influenza activity is occurring later this year than has been seen in recent years, influenza peak in September is comparable to previous years 2017 and 2024, and is likely influenced by the high activity observed in late 2025.
- Geographical distribution of cases has shifted since activity increased in early August, with the first areas with an increase in cases (Southside Cairns and Yarrabah areas) reducing somewhat in recent weeks, while other areas with relatively little activity in August starting to increase in the recent weeks (Tablelands, Cassowary Coast, Port Douglas-Daintree areas). This may suggest that peak activity is being reached and will start to reduce in the coming weeks.
- Increases in cases are occurring across most age groups, except for among children under 5 years old, which may be an impact of FluMist which was rolled out this year, and contributed to an increase in vaccination coverage for this cohort when compared to recent years.
- It is never too late to offer vaccination as it provides the best way to protection for your patients with NIP funded vaccines continuing to be available for high priority groups – see the schedule for recommendations.

Weekly influenza notifications assigned to Cairns Public Health Unit, 1st
January 2026 to 20th September 2026, all age groups



Mpox cases in Southeast Queensland

- Five mpox cases have recently been identified in South-East Queensland, with further testing underway to investigate additional potential cases.
- The current risk to the Cairns & Hinterland region is assessed as low, with no identified epidemiological links to Cairns residents at the time of reporting. Ongoing surveillance and clinical vigilance remain important.
- Victoria has also reported increased mpox incidence recently, with 52 cases reported since 1st August 2026 ([Mpox continues to spread in the community | health.vic.gov.au](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/health-alerts/mpox-continues-to-spread-in-the-community)).
- Cairns Public Health Unit will conduct a free, pop-up mpox vaccination clinic at the Cairns Pride Festival on 25 October 2026.
- The clinic will provide an opportunity to promote mpox vaccination among [eligible priority populations](#), support community awareness, and improve access to preventive health services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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