

# Cairns Public Health Unit

## Monthly surveillance update – October 2026

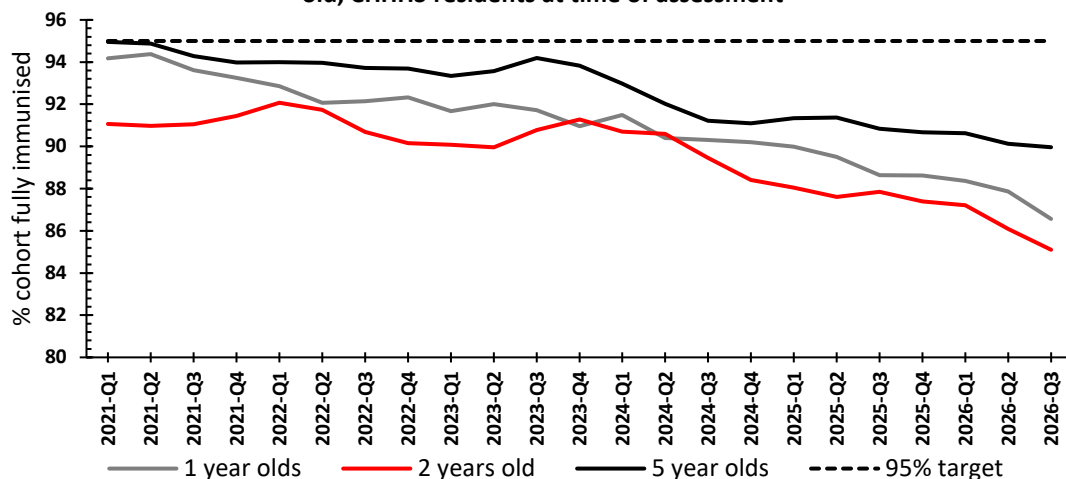
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### Falling immunisation coverage: what primary care clinicians can do

- The most recent childhood immunisation coverage data for Cairns and Hinterland (2025–2026) indicate coverage continues to fall to **87% at one year of age, 85% at two years** and **90% at five years**.

Quarterly, rolling 4-quarter immunisation coverage assessed at 1, 2, and 5 years old, CHHS residents at time of assessment



- Immunisation coverage below the 95% target can increase the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles and pertussis, and leave infants, immunocompromised people and others who cannot be fully vaccinated more vulnerable to infection.
- **One of the strongest and most consistent factors influencing parents' acceptance and uptake of vaccination is recommendation by a GP.**
- GP practices can implement a range of strategies to improve timely childhood vaccination uptake, including:
  - **Send vaccination reminders:** Notify parents or carers *before* vaccinations are due.
  - **Use every clinical encounter as an opportunity:** Recommend and offer eligible vaccines during clinical visits.
  - **Recall overdue patients:** Contact families to encourage completion of the vaccination schedule.
  - **Monitor practice-level coverage:** Regularly review practice-level immunisation coverage and trends, and include immunisation as a topic in routine practice meetings.
- Practice-level immunisation reports can be generated through the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) or through clinical practice management systems.
- **NQPHN can support practices** to build sustainable processes to identify and follow up children who are due or overdue for vaccination. Please email [support@nqphn.com.au](mailto:support@nqphn.com.au) or call 07 4034 0300.
- Depending on the practice's needs, this could include a practice visit, support with AIR and Primary Sense reports, quality improvement coaching, data cleansing, recall and reminder workflow design, and ongoing monitoring of immunisation coverage.

## Melioidosis – prevention messages key ahead of wet season

- The risk of melioidosis infection **increases during periods of heavy rainfall and flooding**, making it particularly relevant as the wet season approaches.
- In 2025, the Cairns and Hinterland region recorded a large outbreak of 138 melioidosis cases and 9 deaths, around 3.5 times the annual average of 40 cases during [2020–2024](#).
- So far this year (as at 4 October 2026), 40 cases and 4 deaths have been reported in the region.
- Ahead of the wet season, GPs should advise at-risk patients (particularly those with diabetes, immunosuppression or chronic cardiac and kidney disease) to:
  - **stay healthy** by managing chronic conditions
  - **stay protected** by covering up cuts and sores when outside, wearing shoes and avoiding mud and puddles, and
  - **stay inside during heavy rain**.
- Health promotion [flyers](#) and [posters](#) for melioidosis are available to use with patients or display in waiting rooms or clinic rooms.
- Where melioidosis is suspected, particularly in unwell patients, urgent hospital assessment is essential.

## Hepatitis A – travel-associated infections and prevention

- Queensland Health has reported increased hepatitis A notifications among travellers returning from overseas, particularly Indonesia, including Bali in recent months.
- GPs are encouraged to review their hepatitis A vaccination history and recommend vaccination for susceptible travellers when indicated.
- People who frequently travel overseas to visit friends and family remain at risk of hepatitis A and should be offered vaccination.
- Suspected or confirmed cases should be managed in accordance with information provided by [Community HealthPathways Far North Queensland](#) and current [Queensland Health guidance](#), including notification requirements and assessment of potential contacts.
- Susceptible close contacts may require post-exposure prophylaxis, including hepatitis A vaccination and, for some individuals, immunoglobulin. Assessment should occur promptly, ideally within 14 days of exposure, contact the Public Health Unit if you have any concerns or suspect post-exposure prophylaxis may be needed.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Cairns Public Health Unit can be contacted on:
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