

MULTIJURISDICTIONAL SYPHILIS OUTBREAK WORKING GROUP (MJSO)

Meeting Communique, 22 February 2018

This communique has been authorised by the chair of the MJSO, Dr Nathan Ryder.

The Multijurisdictional Syphilis Outbreak Working Group (MJSO) was formed by the Communicable Diseases Network of Australia (CDNA) in April 2015, in response to an ongoing outbreak of syphilis among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living largely in remote and rural areas of northern Australia. Increased notifications associated with the outbreak in northern Australia were first reported in January 2011 in northwest Queensland, followed by the Northern Territory (NT) in July 2013, and the Kimberley region of Western Australia (WA) in June 2014. In March 2017, South Australia (SA) declared an outbreak in the Western and Eyre and Far North regions from November 2016.

This communique summarises the outbreak epidemiological data as of 22 February 2018 (current status).

Current status

Outbreak data to 31 January 2018 are summarised in Figure 1 and Table 1 below.

Figure 1. Epidemic curve showing outbreak cases of infectious syphilis^α notified in affected regions^β of Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia from commencement of the outbreak in each jurisdiction to 31 January 2018^γ.

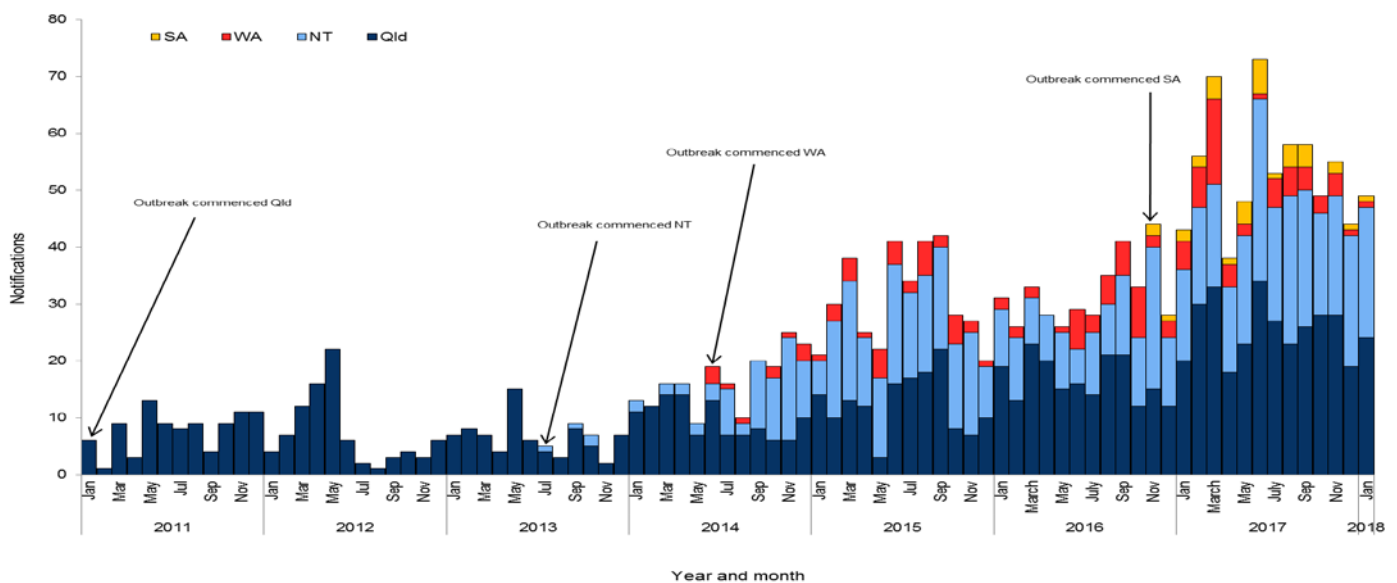


Table 1. Characteristics of outbreak cases of infectious syphilis notified in affected regions of Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia, to 31 January 2018^γ.

	North Qld (four HHSs ^β)	NT (four regions ^β)	WA (Kimberley region)	SA (three regions ^β)
Situation to-date, 31 January 2018				
Outbreak commencement month/year	January 2011	July 2013	June 2014	November 2016
Total number of cases ^α	1066	704	148	34
Percent cases reported in 15-29 year age group	67%	66%	70%	47%
% Male / % Female	48% / 52%	47% / 53%	37% / 63%	44% / 56%
Congenital cases, confirmed (probable)	4 (4)	2 (2)	0 (0)	1 (0)
-number of deaths in congenital cases	6	0	0	0
Last reporting months, 1 December 2017 – 31 January 2018				
Number of cases ^α	43	46	2	2
Percent cases reported in 15-29 year age group	58%	46%	100%	50%
% Male / % Female	37% / 63%	41% / 59%	50% / 50%	0% / 100%

^α Cases defined as per the MJSO syphilis outbreak case definition:

Nationally, an infectious syphilis outbreak case is defined as: any person who is newly diagnosed with confirmed or probable infectious syphilis according to the CDNA national surveillance case definition for infectious syphilis, **AND**, is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who resides in any of the following outbreak declared regions as defined and documented by that jurisdiction, at or after the dates indicated: **Qld** - Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service area (from 1 December 2012); Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service area (from 1 August 2013); North West Hospital and Health Service area (from 1 January 2011); Townsville Hospital and Health Service area (from 1 January 2014); **NT** - Alice Springs or Barkly district (from 1 July 2013); Katherine district (from 1 May 2014); East Arnhem district (from 1 November 2015); Darwin Rural and Urban (from 1 January 2017); **WA** - Kimberley region, Western Australia (from 1 June 2014), **SA** - Far North and Western and Eyre and regions (from 15 November 2016) **OR**, is a sexual contact of a confirmed outbreak case.

^β Affected regions include Torres and Cape, Cairns and Hinterland, North West, and Townsville Hospital and Health Services in Queensland; Alice Springs, Barkly, East Arnhem and Katherine regions in the Northern Territory; the Kimberley health region in Western Australia, and; Western, Eyre and Far North regions in South Australia.

^γ Please note that all data are provisional and subject to change due to ongoing case investigation.