



Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – August 2019

Security	For the Working Group – In confidence
Target audience	Syphilis Outbreak Response Stakeholders; WA SORG, clinicians
Communique no.	2
Reporting Data	As of 30 June 2019 (current status)

The WA Syphilis Outbreak Response Group

Established in August 2018, the WA Syphilis Outbreak Response Group (WA SORG) is coordinating a state-wide response to the syphilis outbreak among Aboriginal people in the outbreak regions. The WA SORG reports to the WA Chief Health Officer, with regular briefings provided to the national Multijurisdictional Syphilis Outbreak Working Group, and the national Enhanced Response Addressing Sexually Transmissible Infections (and Blood Borne Viruses) in Indigenous Populations Governance Group (the Governance Group). The WA SORG encompasses the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, and the Goldfields region as of April 2019.

This communique provides a quarterly update of the WA syphilis outbreak response; the previous Communique (no. 1) was made available in April 2019.

Current status

The outbreak data for affected regions in WA to 30 June 2019 are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1.

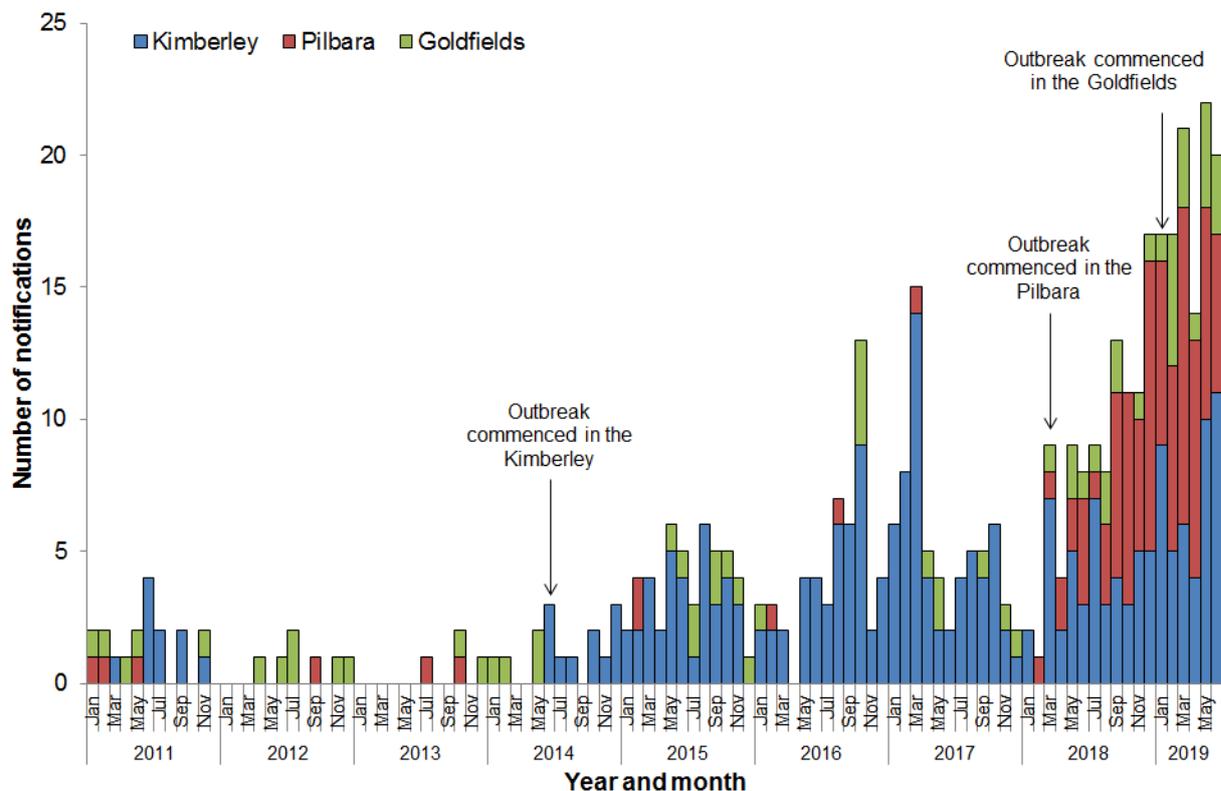


Figure 1. Epidemic curve showing the number of infectious syphilis notifications among Aboriginal people in affected regions in WA (Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields), from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2019.



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Table 1. Characteristics of outbreak cases of infectious syphilis notified in regions of Western Australia, from 1 June 2014 to 30 June 2019¹.

	Kimberley	Pilbara	Goldfields	Total
Characteristics				
Outbreak commencement	Jun 2014	Feb 2018	Jan 2019	Jun 2014
Cases ² last quarter: Jan to Mar 2019	19	26	8	53
Cases this quarter: Apr to Jun 2019	26	22	9	57
Total number of cases (since outbreak commencement)	236	90	17	334
% Cases reported by age group (years)				
15-19	31%	31%	6%	30%
20-24	27%	24%	6%	25%
25-29	12%	12%	35%	13%
30-34	9%	16%	6%	10%
% Cases reported by sex				
Male	39%	49%	47%	42%
Female	61%	51%	53%	58%
Congenital cases				
Congenital cases, confirmed (probable)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)
Number of deaths in congenital cases	0	0	0	0

Governance Update

WA SORG

- The WA SORG meets on a quarterly basis; the WA SORG last met on 17 July 2019, with the next meeting scheduled for 18 September 2019.
- The Goldfields declared a syphilis outbreak in their region. The region established the Goldfields Syphilis Outbreak Response Team and has joined the WA SORG as of April 2019.
- The Midwest have not declared an outbreak but have been included in the WA SORG meetings and activities due to close links with affected regions.
- The Minister for Health endorsed the *WA Syphilis Response Action Plan* (the Action Plan), and launched it on 3 July 2019.
- The Action Plan includes the Monitoring Framework, which is under review by the WA SORG.
- The WA SORG webpage is now available for access by health professionals and the public. This webpage is located on the WA Department of Health website, and includes the Action Plan, relevant reports and communiques.
Available at: https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/WA-Syphilis-outbreak-response
- The Terms of Reference for each Working Group were endorsed by the WA SORG Committee in May 2019. The five Working Groups established by the WA SORG have been progressing the actions under each priority area in the Action Plan, and the key actions that have been addressed by each Working Group to date are outlined in Table 2.

¹ Please note that all data are provisional and subject to change due to ongoing case investigation.

² Cases defined as per the MJSO syphilis outbreak case definition. Refer to MJSO surveillance reports for further information: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-infectious-syphilis-outbreak.htm>



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Table 2. WA Syphilis Outbreak Response Action Plan key priority area activity updates.

<p>Priority Area 1: Prevention, education and community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey disseminated to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to gauge what syphilis related resources exist, and which are most useful. • Cards for patients to complete and discretely provide to health care workers to facilitate the conversation regarding syphilis have been developed and printed; these will be made available in waiting rooms at regional healthcare services, and public places where young people gather. • Exploring use of Aboriginal Health TV to stream appropriate information in waiting rooms. • Resources in development: stand-up display posters for events; screen savers for clinicians.
<p>Priority Area 2: Workforce development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding confirmed for \$1 million to support regional service delivery. • Structured Administration and Supply Arrangement published to enable syphilis treatment to be administered by Aboriginal Health Practitioners. • Mandatory online syphilis training manual for WA health employees in development. • Further training will include education sessions via videoconference and webinars, including a Syphilis in the Regions videoconference on 20 August 2019.
<p>Priority Area 3: Testing, treatment and contact tracing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of WA specific Point of Care (PoC) testing guideline in progress. • WACHS will be rolling out PoC testing into select government and non-government sites that have not been allocated PoC testing under the Commonwealth scheme. A subcommittee is overseeing the allocation of sites and ensuring consistent protocols are in place for testing, interpretation of results, patient management, recording and reporting. • Discussions have occurred with the administrators of the STORK maternity database to enable recording of whether or not syphilis tests have been undertaken at booking, 28 weeks, 36 weeks and at delivery.
<p>Priority Area 4: Surveillance and reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding confirmed for the development of a WA State Syphilis Register; a needs analysis is in progress and a plan will be presented at the September WA SORG meeting. • The WA SORG Action Plan Monitoring Framework is being finalised. • Promoting improved patient information sharing across health services. • Facilitating the updates of the WA SORG Communique; published on-line quarterly.
<p>Priority Area 5: Antenatal and postnatal care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An information sticker to prompt and document antenatal syphilis testing for use on patient files has been developed; implementation in progress. • Approval received for antenatal and postnatal syphilis tests to be recorded in the STORK database (WA pregnancy database); implementation in progress. • KEMH clinical guidelines for syphilis in pregnancy and antenatal STI testing in development. • Protocol for reviewing a case of congenital syphilis is in development.

Prepared by:

Surveillance and Reporting Working Group, WA SORG
On behalf of the Sexual Health & Blood-borne Virus Program, Communicable Disease Control Directorate
WA Department of Health

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Further information relating to the WA SORG available on the WA SORG webpage:
https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/U_Z/WA-Syphilis-outbreak-response