



4th May 2026

Dear NACCHO members,

Re: Diphtheria Outbreak – NT, WA, Qld and SA

The multijurisdictional outbreak of **respiratory and cutaneous diphtheria** affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has expanded and now affects the **Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia**.

The outbreak includes children and adults and about one in four people with diphtheria have required hospitalisation. ACCHOs are reminded to be aware of the clinical presentation of diphtheria, enhance infection prevention, and urgently prioritise vaccination review and catchup.

Further information on diphtheria including clinical presentations, the history of diphtheria in Australia, treatment, and infection prevention and control can be found in NACCHO's clinical alert dated 1st April 2026 and a diphtheria webinar held on 8th April 2026 and available on the NACCHO Learning and Management System <https://learn.naccho.org.au/>.

Key messages for ACCHOs

1. Prioritise vaccination review and catchup

Diphtheria vaccination reduces the risk of serious disease and is an essential component of outbreak responses. Multiple diphtheria-containing vaccines and booster doses are needed to produce and maintain immunity. **Review vaccination status for every child, adolescent and adult**, both actively and opportunistically, and offer vaccination where appropriate. Those aged under 30 appear to be particularly at risk for respiratory diphtheria and should be prioritised.

In outbreak regions, some state and territory departments are recommending that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people **should have a diphtheria vaccine if it has been more than five years since their last vaccine**. These additional vaccines may be free for some groups so please check local PHU and department of health advice to see if this is relevant for your service.

2. Ensure clinicians are aware of diphtheria, local epidemiology, signs and symptoms, infection prevention and control and testing and treatment pathways

Clinicians can access a clinical update on diphtheria on the NACCHO Learning and Management System. Diphtheria is a nationally notifiable disease and all [confirmed and probable cases](#) must be notified to local public health units. Public health units can provide local information about the outbreak.

3. Continue standard sore throat and Strep A management to prevent Acute Rheumatic Fever

Sore throat presentations in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities routinely require prompt assessment and treatment for Strep A to prevent Acute Rheumatic Fever. In the context of the current diphtheria outbreak, clinicians should also consider respiratory diphtheria in patients presenting with a sore throat. This is based on local epidemiology and known movement between communities. Standard sore throat and Strep A management should continue, with diphtheria included in the differential diagnosis where relevant.

Please share this clinical alert with your teams.

If you have any questions or comments, please reach out to your local public health unit or infectious disease department, or contact Dr Megan Campbell, Medical Advisor, on megan.campbell@naccho.org.au