



This newsletter provides an update on current and upcoming developments and initiatives for Public Health at AHCSA and across the Community Control Sector, from state-level coordination and advocacy through to practical support for member services and communities.

### Get Diphtheria Outta Here: Response to the Diphtheria Outbreak

Australia is experiencing its most significant diphtheria outbreak in decades, primarily affecting Aboriginal Communities in NT, WA and SA. After decades of occasional cases of diphtheria, mostly brought in from overseas, diphtheria cases began in remote Aboriginal communities in late 2025 – increasing since October 2025, with a sharp increase from February 2026. Genomic analysis confirms that cases across all four jurisdictions are linked – this is one connected outbreak, not separate events.

The disease is disproportionately affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – nearly 94% of national cases – particularly in remote and very remote communities. More than 84% of cases since December 2025 are in people under 30 years old.

#### SA Confirmed Cases – as at 22 May 2026

First case notified 9 April 2026 in the far north west of SA.

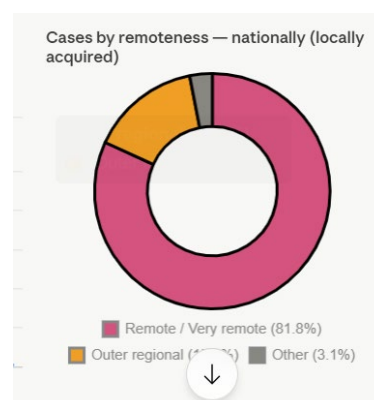
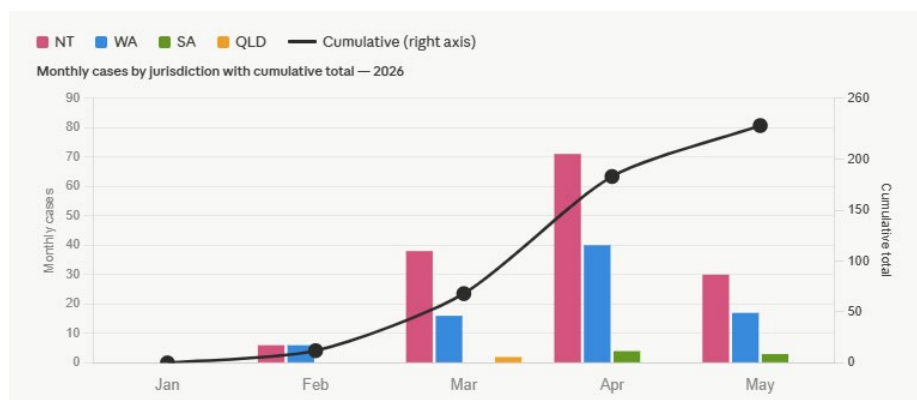
7 confirmed cases to date: 4 respiratory, 3 cutaneous (skin) diphtheria.

All 7 cases are Aboriginal people residing in the Eyre and Far North Local Health Network.

Age range 7–40 years (median 16 years). 5 female, 2 male.

All cases were age-appropriately vaccinated. No hospitalisations. No diphtheria antitoxin required.

Genomic sequencing confirms SA isolate clusters with NT, WA and QLD cases – same outbreak strain.



While SA case numbers remain small, the ongoing spread across jurisdictions means the risk of further cases in SA's remote communities is real and ongoing. Diphtheria had been effectively eliminated in Australia through vaccination.

If you missed the SA Health AHCSA webinar, you can see the recording on the link: [Webinar - diphtheria outbreak response](#)



## AHCSA – Public Health Newsletter

### Response across the sector

AHCSA acknowledges the enormous amount of work underway across the sector to get ready for diphtheria cases and also for the work of Nganampa which has been responding to and guiding the response for SA for many weeks. We also understand that this work is happening currently without additional resources and we acknowledge the strain this puts your service and staff under. AHCSA is continuing to advocate for additional resources for your services to allow you to respond to diphtheria alongside the critical primary health care services you always provide

AHCSA has been actively engaging in the diphtheria response since before the first SA case was notified in April 2026. Our role spans state-level coordination, policy and guideline input, advocacy, member service support, and community communications.

#### State-Level Coordination

<b>COORDINATION</b>	AHCSA has been represented on the SA Health Public Health Division diphtheria response coordination group, participating in regular multi-agency planning meetings alongside SA Health, the Communicable Disease Control Branch (CDCB), Nganampa Health Council, and other key stakeholders.
<b>NACCHO LIAISON</b>	AHCSA has been in regular contact with NACCHO to ensure SA's ACCHO sector is informed of national developments and that SA's local context is represented in national coordination.
<b>ADVOCACY</b>	AHCSA has been advocating directly to SA Health for dedicated, flexible funding to support member services and communities to respond to the outbreak. This includes advocacy for: additional workforce support for remote vaccination clinics; funding for outreach immunisation; resourcing for culturally appropriate community engagement; and supply chain improvements for remote medicine including diphtheria antitoxin access.

#### Technical Input – Guidelines and Immunisation

<b>GUIDELINES</b>	AHCSA provided input into the development of SA Health's clinical and public health management guidelines for the diphtheria response, ensuring the ACCHS context – including remote primary care realities, workforce scope of practice, and community-specific factors – was reflected. This included review of the SA Health Interim Management of Diphtheria in Clinical Settings, the Diphtheria Contact Management tables, and the SA Diphtheria Outbreak Response Immunisation Schedule.
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## IMMUNISATION

AHCSA contributed to development of the state-funded Diphtheria Outbreak Response Immunisation Program.

## Support for Member Services

### WEEKLY WEBINARS

AHCSA has been hosting regular webinars for member service staff, providing updates on the outbreak situation, vaccination program requirements, case management, contact tracing procedures and infection control. These sessions provide a direct channel for member staff to ask questions, raise concerns, and receive timely updates as the outbreak situation evolves – including updates from CDCB and SA Health's Public Health Division.

### TECHNICAL SUPPORT

AHCSA's Public Health team is available to member services for direct technical support – including guidance on case identification, notification processes, contact management, vaccine eligibility queries, and escalation pathways. Member services can contact the AHCSA Public Health team directly for support navigating the CDCB notification process and the SA Health outbreak response framework.

## Communications and Health Education Support

A central part of AHCSA's response has been developing and distributing culturally appropriate, plain-language information resources for communities and health workers. All materials are available through the AHCSA website and have been distributed to member services.

### "Get Diphtheria Outta Here" Campaign

AHCSA adapted the "Get Diphtheria Outta Here" messaging from Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council. All resources are in the community information hub at [www.ahcsa.org.au/get-diphtheria-outta-here](http://www.ahcsa.org.au/get-diphtheria-outta-here)

The hub covers: what diphtheria is and how it spreads; what to look out for (skin sores and sore throats); how to protect family and community; vaccination information; and how to keep safe if a contact of a confirmed case.

## Diphtheria Resources Available for Download

Resource	Audience	Link
Get Diphtheria Outta Here – Community Poster	Community	<a href="#">Download</a>
Diphtheria Flyer – Know the Signs	Community	<a href="#">Download</a>
Community Information for Close Contacts	Community / Health workers	<a href="#">Download</a>



Resource	Audience	Link
Diphtheria Info Sheet	Community / Health workers	<a href="#">Download</a>
Diphtheria Clinical Poster	Health workers	<a href="#">Download</a>

All resources: [ahcsa.org.au/resources/tagged/Diphtheria](https://ahcsa.org.au/resources/tagged/Diphtheria)

Community hub: [ahcsa.org.au/get-diphtheria-outta-here](https://ahcsa.org.au/get-diphtheria-outta-here)

### Key message for community: "Sore throat or skin sore that won't heal? Go to the clinic – don't wait."

Vaccination is the best protection. Aboriginal people aged 10+ should get a booster if it has been more than 5 years since their last dose.

Treatment with antibiotics works well when started early.

Contact your local clinic – they can check your vaccination status and provide a booster if needed.

## How Member Services can prepare

### Vaccination

- Proactively check and update vaccination status for all Aboriginal patients aged 10 years and above – offer a dTpa booster if more than 5 years since last dose (state-funded for eligible groups)
- Ensure all children are up to date with their vaccination schedule.
- Ensure all clinical staff and frontline workers are up to date with their own diphtheria vaccination
- Order vaccines through the Vaccine Distribution Centre (VDC) using the correct category (NIP or state-funded)
- [SA Health Diphtheria Outbreak Immunisation Program \(schedule and eligibility\)](#)

### Case Identification and Notification

- Consider diphtheria in any patient with a non-healing skin sore or sore throat – particularly in patients who are Aboriginal, from remote communities, or who have had contact with a confirmed case
- Consider checking for a history of sore throat or non-healing skin sores at reception. People with these symptoms can be offered a mask and moved in a space away from our people waiting to be seen. Alert the clinician so they can be prepared with the correct PPE to assess the client.
- Notify SA Health CDCB immediately (1300 232 272) for any suspected case – do not wait for laboratory confirmation
- Apply droplet and contact precautions as soon as diphtheria is suspected
- [SA Health: Interim Management of Diphtheria in Clinical Settings \(PDF\)](#)

### Community Engagement

- Display and distribute AHCSA diphtheria resources in waiting rooms and community spaces
- Use the "Get Diphtheria Outta Here" materials to support community health education conversations



- Ensure community members who are close contacts of confirmed cases understand their obligations and receive appropriate follow-up

## Stock:

- Bacterial swabs for MC&S and liquid Amie's transport media
- Azithromycin – 500mg tablets and suspension (for those clinics who stock antibiotics)
- PPE including gowns, surgical masks, gloves and protective eyewear
- Occlusive waterproof dressings to cover cutaneous diphtheria lesions
- Diphtheria-containing vaccines – see [SA Diphtheria Outbreak Immunisation Schedule](#)

## Join AHCSA's Regular Webinars

- AHCSA is holding regular webinars for member service staff to provide outbreak updates, Q&A, and practical guidance
- Contact AHCSA's Public Health team to be added to the webinar invite list and for any direct technical support
- Public Health team: [phmo@ahcsa.org.au](mailto:phmo@ahcsa.org.au)

## Key Contacts and Resources

### Key Links

- [AHCSA: Get Diphtheria Outta Here \(community hub\)](#)
- [AHCSA: All Diphtheria Resources](#)
- [AHCSA: Find your local ACCHS](#)
- [SA Health: Diphtheria Outbreak Immunisation Program](#)
- [SA Health: Interim Management of Diphtheria in Clinical Settings \(PDF\)](#)
- [Australian CDC: Diphtheria Epidemiological Updates](#)
- [Australian Immunisation Handbook: Diphtheria](#)

For information and support on Diphtheria, visit the AHCSA website or contact  
Public Health team: [phmo@ahcsa.org.au](mailto:phmo@ahcsa.org.au)

## Supporting culturally safe, community-led vaccination capacity

From the 11th to 15th of May, AHCSA hosted part 1 of the [2026 AHP Immunisation Program](#). Coming from a collaboration between AHCSA and SA Health, its aim is to make vaccination a routine part of AHP practice and contribute to increasing vaccine uptake in Aboriginal people.

We were pleased to have 8 participants from multiple sites, including Pika Wiya, Yadu Health and Nunyara. Over the 5 days, participants gained knowledge in vaccine preventable diseases and Australia's National Immunisation Program (NIP). They



developed a range of skills, including selecting vaccines to give, gaining consent, administering vaccines and responding to side effects.

After completing part 1, participants will move into part 2, in which they will gain real-world vaccination experience with the support of experienced immunisers. Part 2 will ensure participants are ready to administer vaccines in their home clinics.

AHCSA plans to run the AHP Immunisation Program again in 2026 so keep your eye out for further info.

## Vaccine campaign

AHCSA is working with an external agency to develop a campaign to encourage vaccination in the Aboriginal community. As part of the campaign, we are looking for community members who would like to be photographed to help promote the campaign. The photos will go into posters and other health promotion resources for your community.

### Vaccine hesitancy training

Dr Githie ran a vaccine hesitancy training session on 25/5/26, attended by 8 of our Member Services. The training covered vaccination rates and trends over time, what drives people to be vaccinated or decline vaccination and how to have respectful conversations that support vaccination.

If you missed it there is another training booked on 3 June at 1pm. Email [phmr@ahcsa.org.au](mailto:phmr@ahcsa.org.au) if you would like the calendar invite to be sent.

## AHCSA's Public Health Team

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