



Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – August 2020

Security	For the Working Group – In confidence
Target audience	Syphilis Outbreak Response Stakeholders; WA SORG, clinicians
Communique no.	6
Reporting Data	As of 30 June 2020 (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. 5) was made available in May 2020.

Current status

The outbreak data for affected regions in WA to 30 June 2020 are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1.

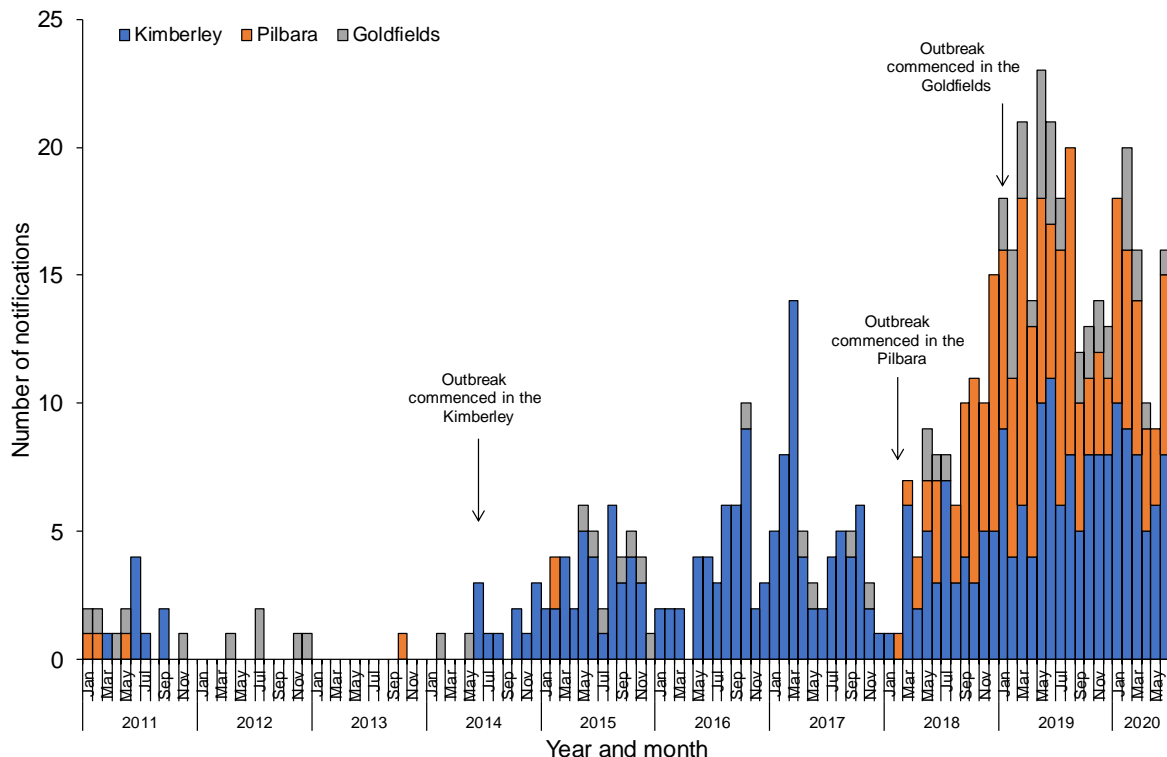


Figure 1. Epidemic curve showing the number of infectious syphilis notifications among Aboriginal people in affected regions in WA (Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields), from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2020.



Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – August 2020

Table 1. Characteristics of outbreak cases of infectious syphilis notified in regions of Western Australia, from 1 June 2014 to 30 June 2020¹.

	Kimberley	Pilbara	Goldfields	Total
Characteristics				
Outbreak commencement	Jun 2014	Feb 2018	Jan 2019	Jun 2014
Cases ² last quarter: Jan to Mar 2020	27	21	6	54
Cases this quarter: Apr to Jun 2020	19	14	2	35
Total number of cases (since outbreak commencement)	324	163	38	525
Number of cases reported by specified age group (%)*				
15-19 yrs	85 (26%)	49 (30%)	4 (11%)	138 (26%)
20-24 yrs	82 (25%)	35 (21%)	6 (16%)	123 (23%)
25-29 yrs	45 (14%)	27 (17%)	11 (29%)	83 (16%)
30-34 yrs	36 (11%)	23 (14%)	5 (13%)	64 (12%)
% Cases reported by sex				
Male	41%	46%	39%	42%
Female	59%	54%	61%	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

* Not all age groups included

Governance Update

WA SORG

- The WA SORG meets on a quarterly basis; the WA SORG last met on 15 June 2020.
- The Midwest maintains membership to the WA SORG due to being an at-risk region but has not been declared as having an outbreak.
- The membership in the Terms of Reference has been amended to include the Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control due to an outbreak declared by the Chief Health Officer in June. The outbreak in the metropolitan area is not linked to the outbreak in regional and remote Aboriginal communities.

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

Priority Area 1: Prevention, education and community engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHCWA youth team and sexual health team have created social media content addressing sexual health. • Flipcharts are being produced by AHCWA with funding from WACHS. The flipcharts are aiming to be multi-purpose, being able to be used by health workers, teachers and health promotion officers. • Increase in the demand for condoms in the regions. • Goldfields are producing local language radio advertisements and community service announcements. Recruitment is complete and content has been developed.

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



Western Australian Syphilis Outbreak Response Group Communique Report – August 2020

Priority Area 2: Workforce development

- ASHM online syphilis module was launched on 17 September 2019 and has been uploaded onto the WACHS Learning Management System. 196 health professionals in WA have completed the module to 31 July 2020.
- Kimberley have launched a sexual health orientation video for new clinicians to the region. The videos were uploaded to WACHS Video Centre and KAHPF website.
- An SRN 2 position has been employed in each of the outbreak regions since receipt of the dedicated syphilis funding. The Kimberley PHU employed an Aboriginal Project Officer in November. The Pilbara PHU has hired 3 new male staff. Goldfields have 2 Aboriginal health promotion officers
- Syphilis VC continue to be coordinated by CDCD and are uploaded to WA SORG website after the session. In 2020 the topics covered are; a contact tracing resource, symptoms and defining stages of syphilis, interactive case scenarios and syphilis PoCT.

Priority Area 3: Testing, treatment and contact tracing

- WA PoCT Program has 19 sites registered in the program and has 3 trainings planned for 10 September and 2 trainings on the 17 September.
- A contact tracing resource has been developed in partnership with Ord Valley Aboriginal Health Service. It has been viewed 567 times.
- A statewide quick guide has been developed for testing and treatment of syphilis. A mailout to all doctors in WA.

Priority Area 4: Surveillance and reporting

- Syphilis register is exploring IT platforms that have capabilities to meet the recommendations made in the syphilis options paper. 1 FTE Syphilis Register Coordinator has been appointed.
- The WA SORG Action Plan Monitoring Framework has been endorsed and added to the Syphilis Action Plan.
- Facilitating the updates of the WA SORG Communique; published online quarterly.

Priority Area 5: Antenatal and postnatal care

- An information sticker to prompt and document antenatal syphilis testing for use on patient files has been developed; implementation in progress.
- STORK has been modified to enable recording of syphilis tests at booking, 28 and 36 weeks and delivery.
- KEMH clinical guidelines for syphilis in pregnancy and antenatal STI testing has been developed.
- 'Syphilis in Pregnancy' campaign is complete. An additional poster has been created that is more specific towards Aboriginal communities.

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

August 2020

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