



Dear Immunisation Provider,

As part of the ongoing response to the diphtheria outbreak in regional Western Australia (WA), the Department of Health is expanding eligibility and access to diphtheria-containing vaccines.

Diphtheria is a serious infection caused by toxin-producing strains of *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* bacteria that can affect the throat (respiratory diphtheria) or skin (cutaneous diphtheria) and may lead to severe, life-threatening disease. As of 03 July 2026, 170 cases of diphtheria have been notified as part of the outbreak in regional WA, with most cases occurring among Aboriginal people. Further information is available at the Department of Health's [diphtheria alert for regional WA](#) page.

National advice reinforces the importance of vaccination as an outbreak control measure alongside other public health interventions to reduce morbidity and mortality. and supports booster vaccination for individuals who have not received a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the past 5 years. The diphtheria toxoid vaccine is designed to protect against the effects of the toxin that cause severe disease and complications due to diphtheria, with more limited effect on infection or transmission. Booster doses are recommended to optimise protection in eligible groups.

WA outbreak vaccination response

Diphtheria-containing vaccines are already free of charge across WA under the **National Immunisation Program** for the following groups:

- infancy and early childhood: at 6 weeks, 4 months and 6 months (Infanrix hexa or Vaxelis), 18 months (Infanrix or Tripacel) and 4 years (Infanrix IPV or Quadracel)
- adolescents: in Year 7 of school, typically between 12 and 13 years (Boostrix or Adacel)
- pregnancy: ideally between 20- and 32-weeks' gestation of each pregnancy (Boostrix or Adacel)
- refugees and humanitarian entrants: who have not previously received diphtheria-containing vaccines.

These vaccines should continue to be used for all individuals eligible under the National Immunisation Program who are due for a scheduled dose.

In response to the outbreak in regional WA, the [WA Immunisation Schedule](#) and [WA Aboriginal Immunisation Schedule](#) have been updated to include eligibility for **outbreak-funded** vaccine boosters for the following individuals who have not received a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the past **5 years** and who are not currently due a dose under the National Immunisation Program:

- Aboriginal people residing in WA
- non-Aboriginal people residing in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields or Midwest regions
- people with regular face-to-face contact with Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields or Midwest (e.g. patient-facing healthcare or frontline workers who work, but may not reside, in these regions).

Access to outbreak-funded vaccines

Immunisation providers located in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields or Midwest regions may order **outbreak-funded** vaccines for eligible individuals as outlined above. To support access to vaccination, Aboriginal Medical Services, Community Health and Public Health Units and selected approved general practices outside these regions may now order **outbreak-funded** vaccines for

eligible individuals, including for Aboriginal people, and other eligible individuals who may be travelling to the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields or Midwest or who are temporarily outside their usual outbreak-affected region of residence. Please see the attached vaccine ordering factsheet for further information including weekly allocation limits. Selected general practices outside of the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields or Midwest regions will be listed on the [diphtheria alert for regional WA](#) page shortly.

Supporting vaccination delivery

Immunisation providers can support the outbreak response by focussing vaccination efforts on groups at higher risk of exposure and severe outcomes, while maintaining access for all eligible individuals:

- ensuring children and adolescents are up to date with scheduled diphtheria-containing vaccines under the **National Immunisation Program**, including school-based programs, via proactive review at healthcare encounters
- offering **outbreak-funded** diphtheria-containing vaccines to Aboriginal people, and patient-facing healthcare workers in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields and Midwest, who have not received a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the past 5 years
- supporting access to **outbreak-funded** diphtheria vaccination for other eligible individuals who have not received a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the past 5 years, who may request vaccination at healthcare encounters.

Australian Immunisation Register

Please ensure all vaccinations are recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

Immunisation provider training and pharmacist administration

The [Educational Requirements for Immunisation Provision](#) has been updated to support the outbreak response, including provisions that allow immunisers to vaccinate without completing the full Health Education and Services Australia (HESA)-accredited immunisation course.

The [Administration of Vaccines by Pharmacists](#) Structured Administration and Supply Arrangement has also been updated to allow pharmacists to administer diphtheria-containing vaccines as part of the outbreak response.

Further information

For further information, please refer to the [diphtheria alert for regional WA](#) or contact the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) at PHEOC@health.wa.gov.au. The PHEOC can also be contacted should further advice, clarification or support be required.

We appreciate your cooperation in protecting our communities during this outbreak.

Yours sincerely



Dr Rebecca Hogan
SENIOR MEDICAL ADVISOR
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL DIRECTORATE
PUBLIC AND ABORIGINAL HEALTH DIVISION

03 July 2026