



## **The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP**

**Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care  
Minister for Indigenous Health  
Member for Hasluck**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

26 March 2019

#### **Response to Syphilis Outbreak Steps up Again**

The Morrison Government is again stepping up the fight against the syphilis outbreak affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in central, northern and southern Australia.

In partnership with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, our Government has begun rolling out Phase 3 of its enhanced response to the outbreak.

Phase 3 extends the Test and Treat model to 11 new Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

The response includes point of care test kits that enable immediate diagnosis and treatment of the disease, compared to a wait of up to two weeks for diagnosis using a traditional blood test.

Syphilis is preventable and treatable, but without treatment is deadly. We are making progress against this outbreak but it is shocking that it was allowed to become so entrenched in some First Nations communities.

The new phase will begin with training of staff and provision of kits at Mala'la Health Service in Maningrida, Western Arnhem Land, in the NT. This will be followed by roll out in the western, Eyre, far north and Adelaide regions of South Australia, and the Pilbara and Western Kimberley regions of Western Australia.

Eight ACCHS sites in North Queensland, the NT and WA, are already offering the Point of Care Test and Treat service with federal funding under the first two phases of the Government's enhanced response.

More than 7,500 people have been tested for syphilis under Phases 1 and 2, and 186 local health professionals have been trained in use of the test kits and on sexual health in general.

Phase 3 is funded with the additional \$12.4 million committed by the Government last December. It brings the Government's total commitment to fighting the outbreak to \$21.2 million over four years to mid-2021.

The enhanced response to syphilis was developed in close consultation with state and territory governments, the ACCHS and other relevant stakeholders. It aligns with the national plan endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.

Phase 3 provides funding for extra staff where needed, staff training, test kits, medication, and culturally appropriate health, communication and education materials.

Since the syphilis outbreak began in 2011, there have been more than 2,500 cases of infectious syphilis and 15 congenital syphilis cases in northern and central Australia.

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