



**11 December 2009**

## **Dengue cases on the increase in Townsville**

Townsville residents are being urged to protect themselves against dengue fever, following a spike of locally-acquired cases in the region over the past few days.

Queensland Health today announced there have been 10 confirmed dengue type one cases in the outbreak, which began in Heatley in early November.

Tropical Regional Services Public Health Medical Officer Dr Steven Donohue is concerned that the outbreak has now spread to Garbutt, Stuart and Wulguru.

“We have had seven cases confirmed in just the past few days,” said Dr Donohue.

“I am also concerned because people contracted dengue from infected dengue mosquitos in areas with no known link to earlier generations of transmission.

“This means there have been infectious cases moving around that we do not know about.

“Dengue cases could now occur anywhere in Townsville and beyond, and could set us up for a bigger outbreak once the more intense rains arrive.”

Dr Donohue said the recent spike in dengue cases was a crucial reminder for Townsville residents to take action.

“The north Queensland dengue epidemics during the last wet season were the largest in at least 50 years, and with this wet season yet to fully arrive, I strongly urge all local residents to take preventative steps,” said Dr Donohue.

“It is important that people — individuals as well as businesses — get rid of mosquito breeding sites around the yard and workplace.

“We want to ensure people are as prepared as possible this year to avoid a repeat of last year.”

Dengue outbreaks spread to Townsville in December 2008, with 57 type one and sixteen type three cases confirmed with the mosquito-borne disease, before it was declared over in May.

The rest of north Queensland had 915 cases during the same period, mainly in Cairns.

“Dengue mosquitoes only breed around homes and in urban areas, and not in swamps or creeks,” said Dr Donohue.

“Therefore, I urge all Townsville residents to take immediate action to help prevent further dengue cases”.

Specifically, this means:

- **once a week**, residents should check their yard for mosquito breeding. Tip out, flush out, throw away or store dry any containers holding water in which mosquitoes can breed
- wear appropriate insect repellent to avoid being bitten, especially during the day
- use indoor surface spray, mozzie zappers and coils around the house to discourage mosquitoes.
- Common dengue mozzie breeding sites include tyres, buckets, toys and pot plant bases. Residents should also ensure that roof gutters are not blocked and breeding mosquitoes.

More information about dengue fever is available at [www.health.qld.gov.au/dengue](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/dengue)

**MEDIA ALERT: Dr Steven Donohue will be available for interview today (Friday 11 December) at 11.30am at TPHU, Tropical Regional Services, 242 Walker Street, Townsville.**

**ends**

**Media contact:**

Gavin Broomhead 4050 3603