

16 December, 2020

## LEGIONELLA ALERT – ST GEORGE AREA

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is advising people who have been in the St George area over the past four weeks to be on the lookout for symptoms of Legionnaires' disease following four notified cases of the infection.

This expands on the previous alert for Legionnaires' disease in the Hurstville area issued on 25 November, 2020. Since this time, two additional cases of Legionnaires' disease in Georges River residents have been notified. These cases visited a number of Georges River suburbs including Hurstville, Kogarah and Rockdale.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Acting Director of Public health, Dr Vicky Sheppard, said symptoms can develop up to 10 days from the time of exposure to contaminated water particles in the air and include fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath and may lead to severe chest infections such as pneumonia.

"People who develop this disease are diagnosed by chest x-ray and a urine test and usually require antibiotic treatment in hospital," Dr Sheppard said.

The South Eastern Sydney Local Health District's Public Health Unit has been working with Georges River Council, which is responsible for monitoring the maintenance of cooling towers in the area, to identify the source of these cases' infections by reviewing records, inspecting and testing registered cooling towers near where each case visited.

To date two Improvement Notices have been issued for water cooling towers with bacterial contamination, however so far *Legionella* bacteria have not been found.

Legionnaires' disease cannot be spread from person to person. Outbreaks of the disease are most frequently linked to contaminated water cooling systems of air conditioning plants in large buildings.

Building owners and occupiers of buildings with water cooling towers are reminded of their responsibility under the public health legislation to ensure the cooling towers are being operated effectively and free from *Legionella* growth.

For more information about water cooling systems management contact your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 or visit:

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/legionellacontrol/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/legionellacontrol/Pages/default.aspx)

For more information on Legionnaires' disease visit:

[https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/legionnaires\\_disease.aspx](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/legionnaires_disease.aspx)