

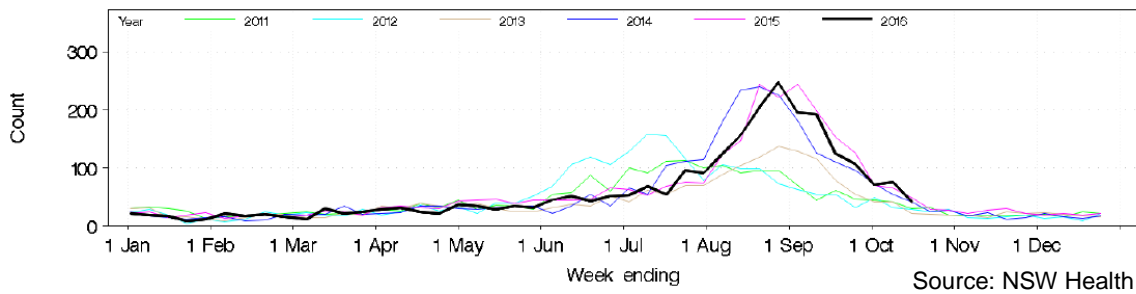
# Hunter New England and Central Coast Public Health Units Communicable Diseases Report October 2016

Decreasing influenza activity  
Increasing gonorrhoea notifications  
Varicella zoster vaccine now funded for 70-79 year olds

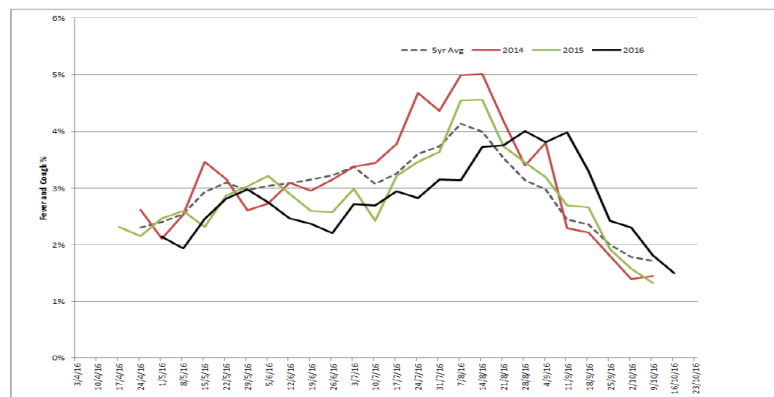
## Influenza and respiratory infection

Influenza activity has decreased further across New South Wales (Figure 1) although HNE and CC PHUs are still receiving more than 80 influenza notifications per week. Data from the community based surveillance system, [Flutracking](#), confirms that influenza-like-illness in Hunter New England is now at low levels (Figure 2). Influenza A (H3N2) is the dominant strain. Respiratory infection with adenovirus, parainfluenza and rhinovirus is currently prevalent.

**Figure 1. Total weekly counts of ED visits for influenza-like illness from 1 January -16 October 2016 (black line) compared with each of the 5 previous years (coloured lines)**



**Figure 2. FluTracking – weekly influenza-like illness reporting, NSW 2011-2016**



**Gonorrhoea.** NSW Health has received more than 5,550 gonorrhoea notifications this year, an 18% increase compared to the same period in 2015. Management and treatment information can be found on [Healthpathways](#) or the [STIPU website](#). The identification and treatment of contacts continues to be a key priority. Please note that screening guidelines for men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) now also include throat and anal swabs for gonorrhoea/chlamydia by nucleic acid testing (NAAT) at least once per year.

## Risk of infection from bats

So far this year, more than 400 NSW residents have received rabies post exposure prophylaxis following high-risk exposures to potentially infected animals. About one-quarter had been bitten or scratched by a bat in Australia, while the others had come into contact with potentially rabies-infected animals overseas. As

the bat breeding season begins, NSW Health is warning against handling injured bats and flying foxes to avoid exposure to the potentially fatal Australian bat lyssavirus which is closely related to the rabies virus. Only people fully vaccinated against rabies and who use protective equipment should handle bats.

### **Mosquitoes and arbovirus infection**

Flooding across the inland and high rainfall since May has resulted in massive mosquito breeding with unprecedented collections for this time of the year. There is a high risk of arboviral infection this summer and people are reminded that [protection against mosquito bites](#) is the best form of prevention.

### **Immunisation News**

Immunisation Register. From the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2016 the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register became The Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) which captures data from all ages. General practitioners and nurse immunisers can [obtain access to the AIR](#). New vaccines added to the register include tetanus, meningococcal disease, herpes zoster, hepatitis A, typhoid, rabies, yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis.

Zostavax. Recently, the NSW Ministry of Health contacted GP practices regarding the funding of Zostavax vaccine for persons aged 70-79yrs. This vaccine is effective in reducing the incidence of shingles and post-herpetic neuralgia. The Australian Immunisation Handbook has been updated to include a [chapter on Zoster vaccination](#).

### **Communicable disease notifications**

**Table 1. Summary of selected notifiable conditions (YTD\* by year), 2012 – 18 October 2016**

	Hunter New England (YTD* by year)					Central Coast (YTD* by year)				
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
<b>Cryptosporidiosis</b>						60	22	10	28	30
<b>Gonorrhoea</b>	310	208	214	163	206	104	76	57	82	45
<b>Syphilis</b>	38	45	30	30	20	9	20	33	25	28
<b>Chlamydial Inf'n</b>	2380	2177	2212	2332	2375	865	756	861	681	864
<b>Influenza</b>	2931	2522	2745	376	1082	1036	725	368	71	131
<b>Meningococcal Disease</b>	7	6	8	10	6	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
<b>Pertussis</b>	944	687	293	179	464	339	328	17	30	196
<b>Ross River Virus</b>	79	333	166	102	136	7	62	11	14	15
<b>Salmonellosis</b>	324	324	376	317	242	136	111	145	107	112

\*YTD Year to date for each year (reporting delays may result in changes to 2016 figures)

#### **Population Health contact details (note, 1300 066 055 will find your local PHU)**

Hunter New England: Wallsend Office 4924 6477 Tamworth Office 6764 8000  
 Central Coast Public Health Unit: Gosford Office 4320 9730

This [Communicable Disease Report](#) and previous editions are available on the internet

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