

Review of the 2017 influenza season in Australia and what to expect in 2018

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www.influenzacentre.org



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The Melbourne WHO Collaborating
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Government Department of Health



How was the 2017 SH influenza season for you?

- Normal season – nothing much different from any other
- Low season – similar to 2010
- Medium season – similar to 2011, 2013
- Big season – similar to 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016
- Massive season – Once in every decade or two = 2009!



2017 Australian Influenza season

- A big “Influenza” season by most accounts
 - NNDSS Lab confirmed influenza data
 - Highest “interseasonal” influenza activity (Jan-Mar) on record (again)
 - More than double the previous highest no. of lab confirmed cases recorded 249,774 (cf: 2015:100,597)
 - Slightly early start to main season with increased cases reported by NNDSS in early-June, slight delay in peak (Wk 36 w/e Sept 8) baseline Dec.
 - ASPREN-VIDRL ILI figures showed highest levels in 5 years
 - Extremely high level of press coverage throughout season
- Characteristics of season
 - Australia mainly A(H3N2), followed by B’s and A(H1N1)pdm09
 - FluCan data; 3969 admissions; double 2016 (1860); cases admitted directly to ICU 8.9% in 2017 (10%:2016, 8.7%:2015, 14.3%:2013; 14% kids, 33% adults, 52% >65y)
 - Deaths; 598 (2016: 92) influenza associated (to 27 Oct)
 - Paediatric hospitalizations – 68 (2016:21); 51 flu A, 16 Flu B, 1 death





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AUGUST 30 2017 - 1:52PM

SAVE PRINT LICENSE ARTICLE

August 2017 is the worst month on record for the flu with 35,670 cases in NSW

Rachel Browne

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It will come as no surprise to anyone who has sniffled, sneezed and spluttered their way through the last part of winter but official figures have confirmed that August 2017 was the worst month on record for flu cases in NSW.

NSW Health data shows there were 35,670 confirmed flu cases in NSW in August, more than double the number of cases in July.



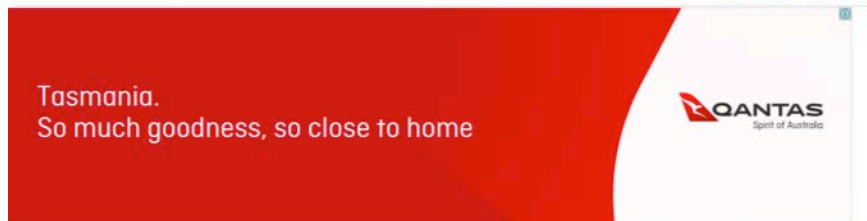
Flu cases hit an all-time high in August.



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August 30

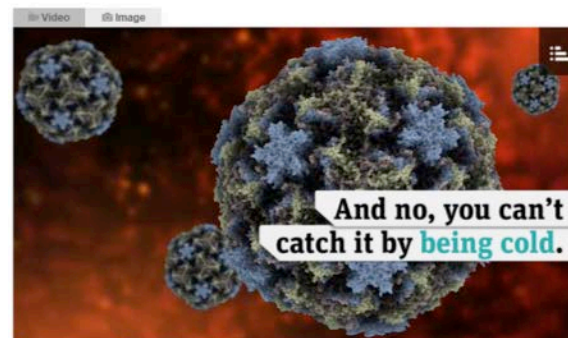
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health health problems

Australia hit by worst flu outbreak on record in 2017

AUGUST 15, 2017 2:27PM



Is it a cold or the flu?



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Herald Sun



More than half national 88,000 flu cases recorded in NSW

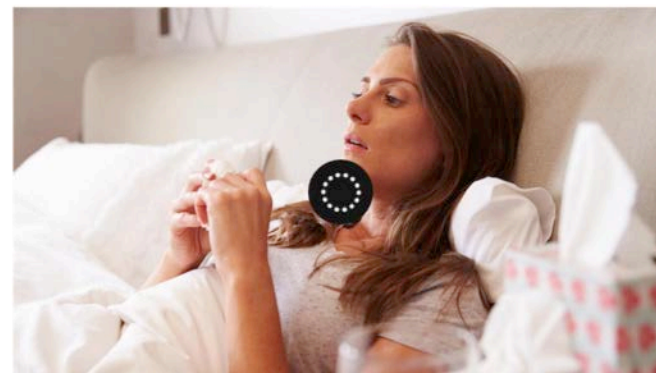
CLARISSA BYE, The Daily Telegraph
August 22, 2017 12:00am

- Doctors battle worst season on record
- Doctors fear people will die in flu season

TENS of thousands of people across NSW have been laid low as the most devastating flu outbreak in years has swept across the country.

Nearly half of the 88,357 cases of flu in Australia so far this year have been recorded in this state. The influenza season has emptied classrooms across Sydney and forced companies to hire temporary staff to fill in for ill workers.

NSW Health authorities said the season is peaking earlier than in previous years, with almost 10,000 people last week arriving at the emergency departments across the state with flu-like symptoms. More than 42,000 have been struck by the illness this year.



5 Nutrition Myths About Cold and Flu Season

Flu outbreak: Doctors battle worst season on record as four viruses hospitalise more than 8200

JACK MORPHET, The Sunday Telegraph
August 6, 2017 1:58pm

BABIES and young children are bearing the brunt of an unprecedented flu outbreak as four separate strains of the virus run rampant across Sydney and NSW.

The worst flu season on record has seen more than 8200 people turn up to hospital emergency departments last week with respiratory illnesses. Of these, 2375 were either admitted to hospital, had immediately life-threatening conditions or arrived by ambulance.

The total flu death toll this year is still being collated.

JACK MORPHET, The Sunday Telegraph
August 6, 2017 1:58pm

CLARISSA BYE, The Daily Telegraph
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Queensland double in years

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August 14

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This may not be the 'biggest flu season on record', but it is a big one – here are some possible reasons

August 16, 2017 14pm AEST

When the H3N2 strain dominates, we see bigger flu seasons and cases affecting the elderly more than the young. [View all articles on this topic](#)

This year, the number of laboratory-confirmed influenza (flu) virus infections began rising earlier than usual and hit **historic highs** in some Australian states. If you have been part of any gathering this winter, this is probably not news.

States in the **south-east** (central and southern Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia) are more inflamed by flu than those in the north and west. For example, Queensland has seen more influenza cases than in the last five years, mostly among the elderly. In many regions, more people are testing positive for the virus without needing hospitalisation.

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Disclosure statement

The authors do not work for, consult, own shares in or

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AUGUST 16 2017

'It's been hell': Australia in grips of worst flu in at least 15 years

Liam Mannix | Emily Woods

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Adrian Taylor says he spent the weekend "in hell" after being struck down by the flu four days ago.

"It's been hell, I have lost about four kilos and haven't left the house.



The Flu Vaccine

What goes into the flu vaccine?

This year's National Immunisation Program flu jab protects against the four strains of flu predicted to circulate in Australia over the winter months.

"I've had fever, have not been able to move or get out of bed, I've had headaches, coughing and I got tonsillitis that was brought on by the flu."

August 6

Health

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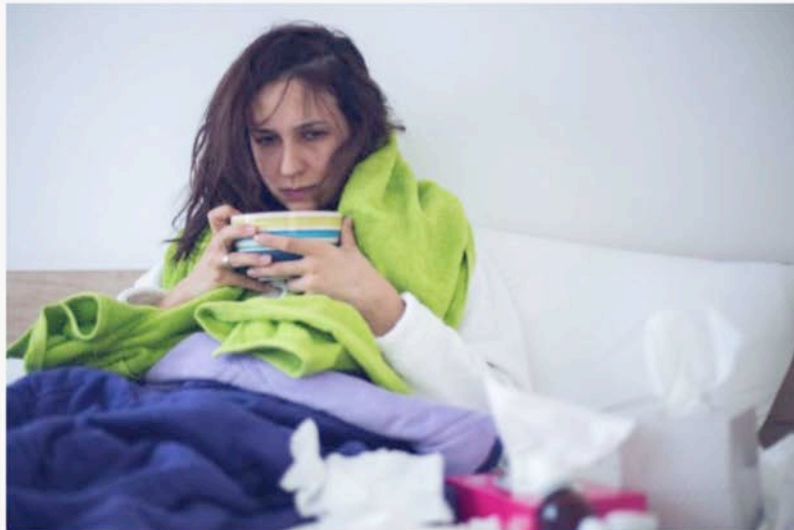
Flu epidemic: Experts explain the reasons behind Australia's bad season

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ABC Health & Wellbeing By Cathy Johnson and James Bullen

Updated Friday at 10:21

First posted Thursday at 15:31



The viruses weren't more severe - but there were a lot more cases of influenza this year (Getty Images: South_Agency)

If you've escaped flu this year, there's some good news: the peak of our bad flu season seems to have passed in most, if not all, parts of Australia.

But because there have been significantly more influenza cases than usual, there's still a lot of illness around.

We asked infectious diseases experts Professor Peter Collignon from the Australian National University's Medical School, and Professor Allen Cheng from Monash University and The Alfred Hospital to answer some common questions.

How bad has this year's flu season been?

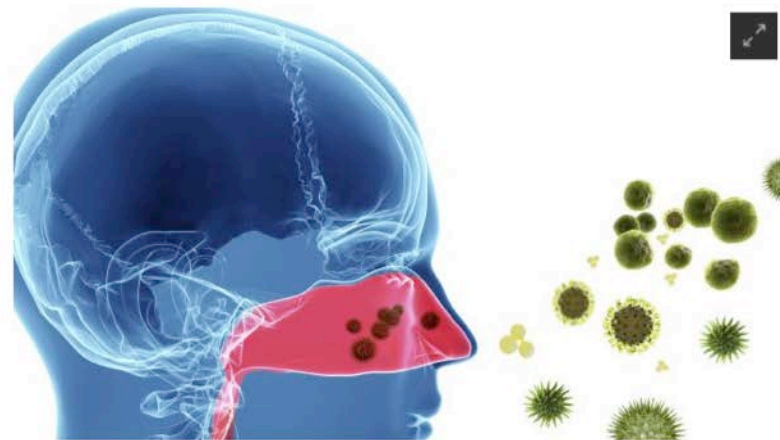
If you look at the result of lab tests, there's been more than 2.5 times the number of confirmed

[Canberra mother dies from](#)

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THE NATION

Influenza and pneumonia now 11th most common cause of death



The official death toll from this year's flu season has hit 121.

The Australian | 12:00AM September 28, 2017

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TESSA AKERMAN
Reporter | Melbourne | @TessaAkerman

The official death toll from this year's flu season continues to rise, with the national surveillance agency alerted to 121 flu-related deaths so far this year, up from 72 at the beginning of the month.

The federal influenza surveillance report for the fortnight to September 15 predicted moderate to high levels of flu activity would continue over the next few weeks.

Confirmed cases of the flu have more than doubled so far this flu season, calling into question the effectiveness of the new quadrivalent vaccine, which has struggled to contain the virulent H3N2 strain of flu that has hit older people particularly hard.

According to the report, flu activity continues to increase in parts of the Northern

“ They were caged in, therefore sitting ducks for a mass shooter with a machine gun on a tripod, sitting at a hotel window. [More >](#) ”

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Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services



Monday, 2 October, 2017

FLU FUNDING BOOST TO TREAT MORE HOSPITAL PATIENTS

The Andrews Labor Government is delivering a \$115 million boost to give Victoria's busy hospitals relief from a massive surge in demand following one of Victoria's worst-ever flu seasons.

Visiting the Royal Melbourne Hospital today, Minister for Health Jill Hennessy, announced that all public hospitals as well as 15 Bush Nursing Centres will share in a special funding support package.

This year's flu season has resulted in sustained pressure on Victoria's health system with more than 14,000 flu cases reported across Victoria so far.

Over winter there has been a surge in people visiting emergency departments. In August alone, more than 3,900 people visited emergency departments each day – the largest ever for August on record.

Hospitals right across the State have risen to the challenge, dedicating significant resources and staff to providing Victorians world class care this winter and flu season.

This funding package will support hospitals to ensure a record number of patients can get the care they need from emergency departments faster, for the remainder of the year. Quicker hospital transfer times will also enable paramedics to get back on the road sooner and save more lives.

People waiting for elective surgery will also benefit with more people than ever expected to receive surgery in 2017/18.

This boost is another part of the Labor Government's actions to manage the flu season and meet rising demand on the health system. While the peak is coming to an end, hospitals continue to urge patients with less severe illnesses to contact their GP, a pharmacist – including Victoria's 24/7 Supercare Pharmacies - or NURSE-ON-CALL.

The extra \$115 million boost comes on top the record \$1.67 billion provided in the *Victorian Budget 2017/18* to support hospitals to meet demand and provide high quality, safer care to patients, no matter where they live.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

"This flu season has hit us hard. Every single one of our public hospitals has been working overtime so Victorians can continue to have access to the care they need - when they need it."

"Our dedicated doctors, nurses, paramedics and other healthcare workers have done a remarkable job in the face of unprecedented demand - ensuring patients are receiving the first class care they deserve."

Quotes attributable to Ambulance Victoria Chief Executive Officer Tony Walker

"This funding will not only support our hospitals, but it will help our ambulance services move patients quicker through emergency and get our paramedics back on the road sooner."

"Our ambulances are there for life-threatening emergencies—the best way we can help Victorians is if we're out on the road. This boost will help us get there."

Media Contact: Elisa Fernandes 0438 021 203 | elisa.fernandes@minstaff.vic.gov.au



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health health problems

Nathan Brown, 19, has tragically died after contracting influenza A virus

THE 19-year-old has tragically lost his life after battling complications from the flu virus.

Rebecca Sullivan and staff writer



Experts fear flu vaccine less effective

AUSTRALIA'S monster flu season has tragically claimed the life of a teenage boy from Lake Macquarie in NSW.

Nathan Brown, 19, died from complications from influenza A after his organs began to shut down four weeks ago and he was put in a medically-induced coma.

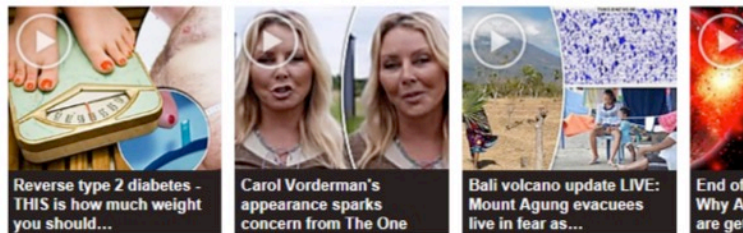
He had been on life support at the John Hunter Hospital, battling acute pneumonia, staph infection, collapsed lungs, kidney failure, and fluid in his heart as a result of the influenza virus.

Nathan's uncle, Peter Brown, told the *Newcastle Herald* that his nephew passed away on Friday morning.

According to Mr Brown, Nathan's family and friends had all been praying for his recovery and are all understandably very distraught.

Mr Brown started a [GoFundMe page](#) last week to assist with the 19-year-old's

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Flu symptoms: Aussie virus is on its way to UK - could catching it KILL you?

FLU rates are predicted to rise above normal in the UK this winter after the Aussie flu left several people dead. But could catching the influenza virus kill you?

By LAUREN CLARK

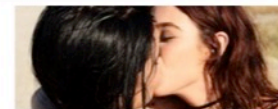
PUBLISHED: 04:01, Fri, Sep 29, 2017



Flu symptoms: Deadly Aussie virus is on its way to UK

Flu may be a common winter illness, but this year the UK is braced for a more serious outbreak

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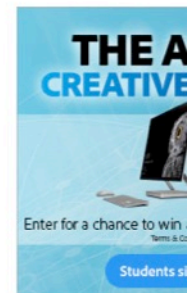
Mother-of-two dies from influenza in the ACT

A MUM-OF-TWO has become the most recent victim from influenza, in what has been described as a season in a decade.



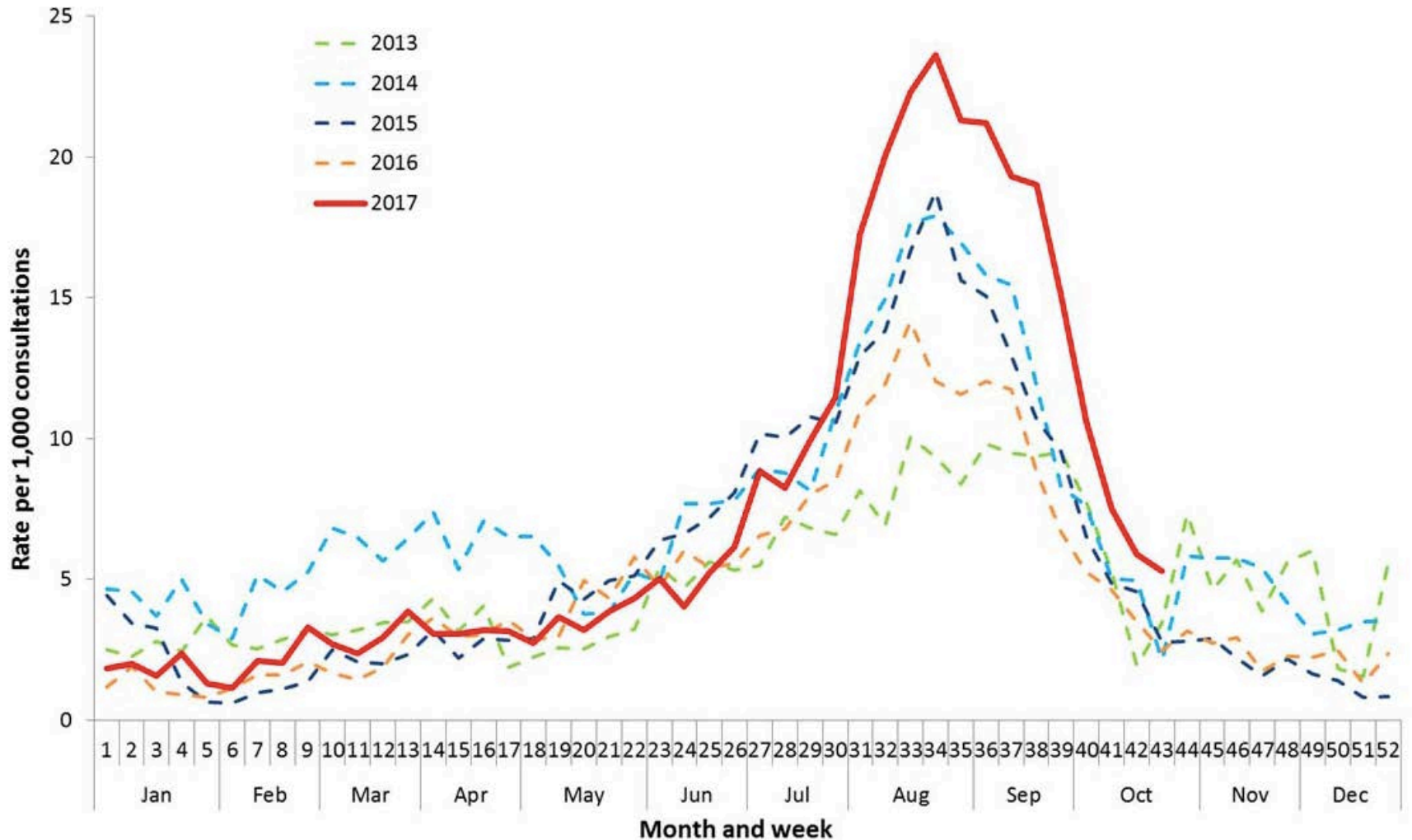
ACT mum-of-two Jennifer Thew has died from complications from influenza. Source: Facebook Source:Facebook

A MOTHER-OF-TWO has become the latest fatality from influenza during the worst flu season Australia has seen in years.

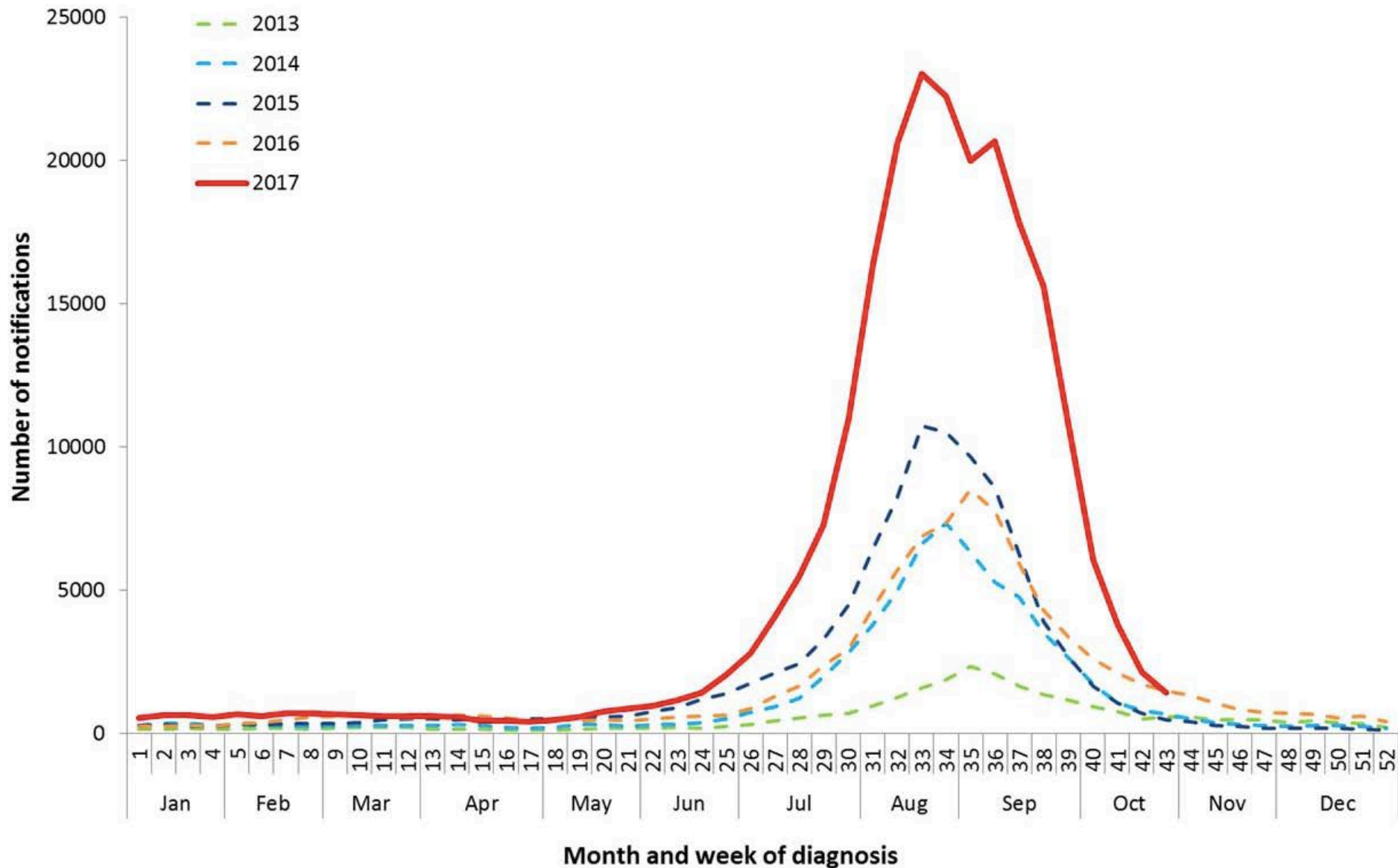


Influenza in 2017 in Australia

SENTINEL GP ILI SURVEILLANCE

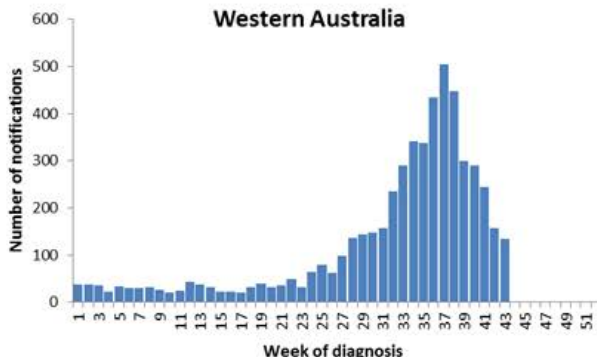
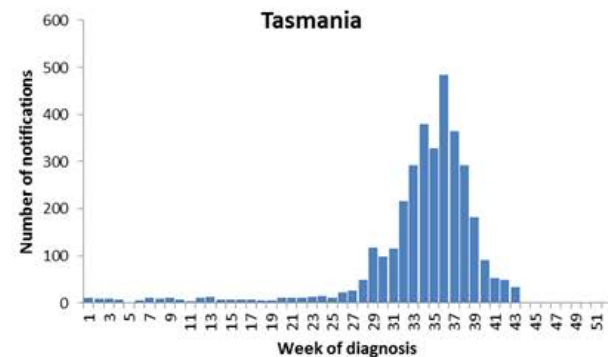
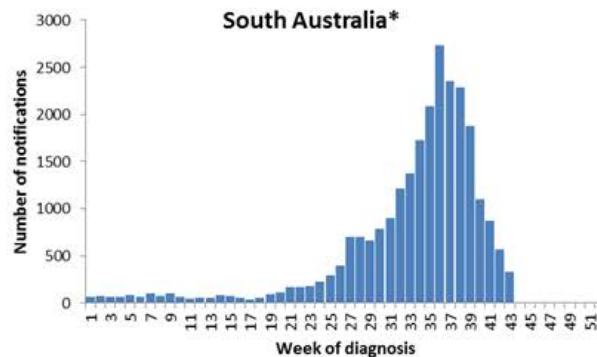
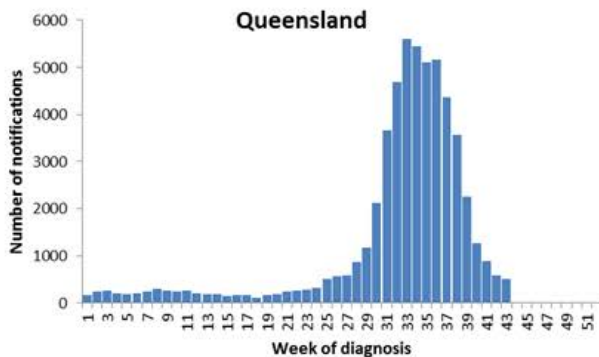
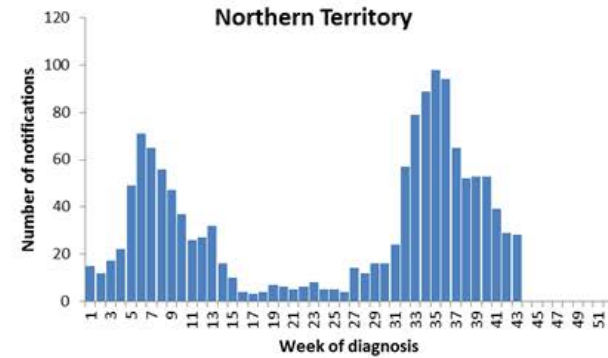
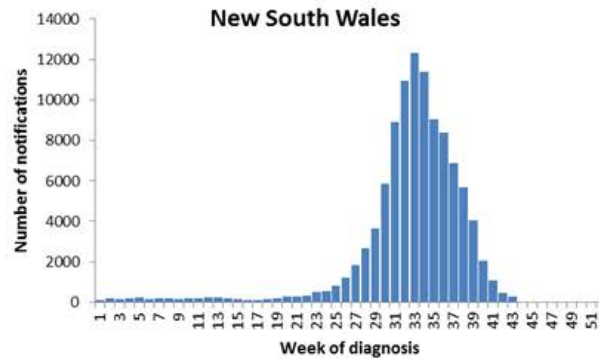
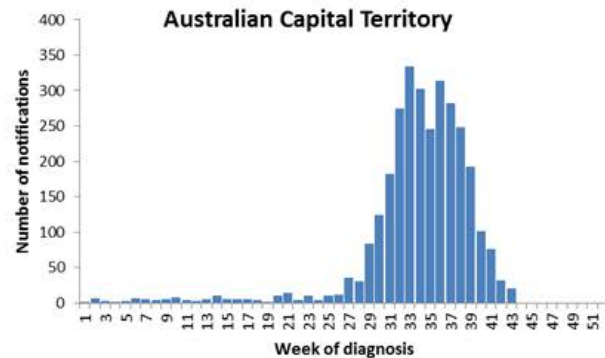


Lab confirmed influenza in Australia 2013-17 (NNDSS)



Lab confirmed influenza in Australia 2017 by State

- Similar timings but variation in numbers of cases



Source: NNDSS

*South Australia and Victoria are currently experiencing a backlog of influenza notifications to be entered into the NNDSS



NNDSS Laboratory confirmed influenza cases by state 2016

State	#	Rate/ 100K
ACT	3087	765
NSW	103852	1341
NT	1460	594
QLD	56136	1157
SA	27588	1610
Tas	3505	677
Vic	48104	778
WA	6012	234
Total	249744	1031

