

# New legion of bacteria cases

**Sarah Booth**

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## A legion of new cases

### Officials warn source of major outbreak is still unknown

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The 40 cases – almost double Monday's total – were all detected in the past five days, and "most" of them were so sick they needed to be hospitalised.

Hudson Institute of Medical Research director Professor Elizabeth Hartland said this

was the biggest outbreak since the 2000 Melbourne Aquarium cluster, which infected more than 150, killing four.

"For Australia, this is definitely a significant outbreak," she told the Herald Sun.

"Unfortunately it looks like there are several people in intensive care, so that suggests to me that there is something that's been heavily contaminated and people have breathed in quite a few legionella bacteria, and they're quite sick."

But she was optimistic about the outbreak's future, and said once authorities alerted the public, people normally began disinfecting potential water sources.

"Normally what happens is when people know there's an outbreak going on, there's a lot of cooling tower disinfection that goes on, so usually it just fizzles out and the real source is never identified," she said.

"So it would be unusual for it

to keep going, unless it's an unusual type of water.

"For Melbourne, it's normally cooling towers that have legionella for them, but it can be spas, or pools, or car washes or foundations or anything that has water where it's held at a higher than ambient temperature."

She said it was important to remember the disease cannot spread from person to person, and the best advice was to get tested if you have any symptoms.

Victorians were first alerted to the outbreak on Monday – when 22 cases were recorded – and the northern and western suburbs were later highlighted as key areas.

Symptoms include fever, chills, cough, headache and muscle aches and pains, with smokers and people over 40 or with a compromised immune system at a higher risk.

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