

Australia eliminates trachoma as public health problem

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has validated Australia for eliminating trachoma as a public health problem, marking a significant milestone in the health of Indigenous peoples and in global efforts to combat neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Trachoma, the world's leading infectious cause of blindness, no longer represents a public health problem in the country.

Australia is among a growing number of countries that have successfully eliminated trachoma, contributing to global progress towards the targets set out in the WHO road map for NTDs 2021–2030.

Trachoma is caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis* and spreads through close contact with infected individuals, contaminated surfaces, and flies that carry eye and nose discharge. Repeated infections can lead to scarring of the eyelids, turning eyelashes inward, and ultimately causing blindness if untreated.

Over time, sustained screening, treatment, and prevention activities, including improvements in housing, water, sanitation and hygiene, led to a steady decline in trachoma prevalence. Australia's approach included adaptations to reflect its context, such as targeted treatment based on community-level data rather than mass drug administration, and strong integration with environmental health programmes.

In addition to trachoma, Australia has several endemic NTDs, including Buruli ulcer, leprosy and scabies. Validation of elimination of trachoma as a public health problem marks the first time that WHO has confirmed the elimination of an NTD in Australia, which becomes the 63rd country globally and 16th in the Western Pacific Region to have eliminated at least one NTD.