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**Title:**

**The Dengue Epidemic of 1925-26 : Infectious Disease and Environment in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Australia**

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**Abstract:**

In the summer of 1925-26 Australia experienced one of the most significant outbreaks of infectious disease in its history. In a little over three months a huge epidemic of dengue rolled over much of Eastern Australia, extending from the far north of Queensland, to Bourke and Tilpa in New South Wales infecting hundreds of thousands of Australians. In a matter of months, the epidemic killed 147 people and infected approximately a half a million more. In absolute and relative terms this outbreak of dengue ranks alongside the influenza pandemic of 1919. In Queensland and New South Wales, upwards of 70% of the population may have caught dengue during the summer of 1925-26, and in some small towns the attack rate was in excess of 90%. Writing a few years later, Sutton estimated that 75% of all schoolchildren in Queensland had caught dengue during this and subsequent outbreaks during the 1920s. The epidemic caused a major dislocation to normal social and economic life as well as tremendous human suffering. Reconstruction of this epidemic provides us with an insight into the spread of vector-borne disease in time and space, then and now, as well as an insight into community behaviour during times of disaster. At another level, parallels may be drawn about the particular environmental and human conditions of 1925-26 and possible future outbreaks of dengue in the context of a changing climate.