What is legionellosis or Legionnaires’ disease?
- Legionnaires’ disease is an infection of the lungs (pneumonia) caused by bacteria of the Legionella family. It is also known as legionellosis.
- Infection occurs when a person breathes in bacteria that are commonly found in the environment.

What are the symptoms?
- Legionnaires’ disease usually causes fever, chills, a cough and shortness of breath. Some people also have muscle aches, headache, tiredness, loss of appetite and diarrhoea.
- People can become very sick with pneumonia; most people recover but the disease is occasionally fatal.

How do people get Legionnaires’ disease?
- Legionnaires’ disease can occur after someone breathes in contaminated water vapour or dust.
- Legionella pneumophila bacteria are the most common cause of Legionnaires’ disease in NSW and can contaminate cooling towers or other water systems, such as spas, fountains etc.
- People may be exposed to these bacteria at home, at work, or in public places.
- Legionnaires’ disease is not spread from person to person.

Who is at risk?
The risk of any one individual contracting Legionnaires’ disease remains low. Legionnaires’ disease most often affects middle-aged and older people, particularly those who smoke or who have chronic lung disease. Also at increased risk are people whose immune systems are suppressed by medications or disease, such as cancer, kidney failure, diabetes etc.

What should people do if they are concerned that they may be infected?
If you are concerned that you may have any of the symptoms listed above then please contact your GP or usual doctor immediately for assessment and advice.

How many legionella cases are linked to the cluster in Sydney Local Health District?
There are currently five cases of confirmed Legionnaires’ disease that Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) is investigating as part of an outbreak. Four cases have common exposures related to the shopping precinct around Burwood. The fifth case was confirmed on 22 May however does not have exposures related to the shopping precinct around Burwood

What action have Sydney Local Health District taken in response to this outbreak?
Environmental health officers have completed the assessments and testing of all potential sources of the outbreak in the Burwood Local Government Area (LGA), the common area where all Legionnaires’ cases had visited before the onset of the disease. So far, there have been no positive test results. Final results will be available at the end of this week. As a precaution, SLHD continues to assess cooling towers outside the Burwood investigation area, although these are less likely sources. These include parts of Concord West and Rhodes where some, but not all, patients visited.

What is the risk of contracting Legionella for people living in the inner west area?
At this time the risk of contracting Legionnaires’ disease to any one individual who may live or work in and around the inner western Sydney area is low. Sydney Local Health District is conducting a thorough investigation and continues to take action to find the source of this outbreak in order to prevent any further cases from occurring.