Dengue mozzie trial

MOSQUITOES infected with a bacteria that blocks transmission of dengue fever will be released into the wild near Cairns in January in a world first.

Scientists will hold field trials of a unique method for combating the potentially fatal infection.

The Eliminate Dengue Project, backed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has received final regulatory and safety approvals.

The mosquitoes will be infected with wolbachia, a bacteria found widely in fruit flies and other insects.

“We’re hoping that in the course of one wet season we should be able to take a study area and see the wolbachia invade the whole population of mosquitoes,” project leader Scott O’Neill, from the University of Queensland, said.

“The main effect that it has is to prevent the mosquito from being able to transmit dengue.”

The trials, which have received final approvals from the Federal Government’s Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, will begin in the Cairns suburbs of Gordonvale and Yorkeys Knob.