



Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care

TODAY'S NEWS

Sunday, 6th August 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Sunday Age](#) (page 1) reports standard GP consultations in Victoria dropped by one fifth between 2019 and 2023, with patients deterred by rising living costs and fewer clinics offering bulk-billing – under two thirds of Australians now have all their appointments bulk-billed, according to Department of Health data. Minister for Health Mark Butler said GPs will soon see a tripling of bulk-billing incentives for no-gap services to child, senior and concessional patients, on top of a \$1.5 billion Medicare rebate indexation boost.
- The [Sun Herald](#) (page 1) reports mental health not-for-profit Smiling Minds is backing a renewed call by National Children's Commissioner Anne Hollonds for the appointment of a federal minister for children, as psychologists record rising levels of anxiety and mental illness in children of primary school age. The portfolio of Early Childhood and Youth, held by Anne Aly, covers children under 5 and people aged 12 to 25 but policy for five-to-12-year-olds falls to assorted ministries, such as a \$192 million program to fund mental health and wellbeing initiatives in schools announced by Minister for Education Jason Clare and Assistant Minister for Mental Health Emma McBride. *Also reported by:* [Sunday Age](#)
- The [Sunday Mail Adelaide](#) (page 1) reports the number of patients in SA hospital emergency departments forced to wait over 24 hours for a ward bed more than tripled from 2,655 in 2017-

18 to 8,843 last financial year. From June to July this year, ambulance ramping hours rose from 3,105 to 3,354. "Our hospitals and health system should never have reached this crisis point," said SA Salaried Medical Officers Association's Bernadette Mulholland. *Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [ABC News \(Online\)](#).*

- The **[Sunday Tasmanian](#)** (page 1) reports Tasmania's Health Department spent more than \$57 million over the nine months to March 31 flying specialist locums from mainland states to cover workforce shortfalls in the state's hospitals. AMA vice president Dr Annette Barratt said she is hopeful that recent award agreements restoring parity with other states will begin to address the state's critical shortage of both specialists and GPs. *Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).*
- The **[Sunday Times](#)** (page 2) reports WA opposition leader Libby Mettam has launched a petition to have the Cook government's pledged \$1.8 billion maternity hospital development moved from the Fiona Stanley Hospital precinct back to its originally-designated site at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre in Nedlands. "We are committed to a women's and baby hospital at the QEII site, and until we see any other evidence to illustrate it should be anywhere else, that will not change," Ms Mettam said.
- The **[Sunday Age](#)** (page 3) reports reproductive healthcare providers in Victoria say access to terminations for many women will be little improved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration's easing of abortion pill restrictions as long as regional and rural areas remain under-resourced. An auditor-general's report in May found 17 local government areas lacked surgical or medical termination services. "Victorians shouldn't have to travel across the state or empty their bank account to access basic healthcare," said Greens MLC and health spokeswoman Sarah Mansfield.
- The **[Sunday Territorian](#)** (page 9) reports Northern Territory senator Malarndirri McCarthy on Saturday announced \$4.7 million in funding to promote AFL football for young people in remote communities, especially girls. The Commonwealth will provide \$2.5 million and the Australian Sports Commission \$2.2 million. *Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#).*
- The **[Sunday Telegraph](#)** (page 11) reports the Pharmacy Guild of Australia has fired another broadside at the government's 60-day prescribing reforms, saying the touted benefit of fewer GP consultations is undermined by admissions in a Department of Health webinar that doctors may still write shorter scripts. RACGP president Nicole Higgins rejected the point. "If there is a medical reason a person needs to be followed up earlier, than we have discretion about how many repeats to issue. 60-day dispensing does not change this," she said. *Also reported by: [Sunday Herald Sun](#), [Sunday Mail Adelaide](#), [Sunday Tasmanian](#)*

MINISTER BUTLER

Patients avoid GPs as cost-of-living pain swells

Sunday Age, General News, 06/08/2023, Henrietta Cook, Page 1

Patients are delaying or avoiding GP appointments as the cost-of-living crisis bites, with 2 million fewer standard consultations taking place in Victoria this year compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic. Melbourne GP Dr Roderick Aziz, who owns 45 practices in Victoria, estimates about a third of patients across his clinics are postponing appointments because of rising living costs. [...] The cost of seeing a GP continues to rise: fewer than 65 per cent of Australians now have all their appointments bulk-billed, federal Health Department data shows. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said it had never been harder or more expensive to see a doctor.

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Call for all states to make meningococcal vaccine free

HealthTimes, Other, 05/08/2023, Robyn Wuth and John Crouch

Queensland has joined South Australia in making the meningococcal B vaccine free for vulnerable children, with advocates calling for other states to follow their lead. They say states and territories

should not wait for the national program to expand access to free jabs because it could put children's health at risk. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler has been contacted for comment.

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MINISTER WELLS

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

Better head start for kids

Sun Herald, General News, 06/08/2023, Natassia Chrysanthos, Page 1

The federal government is under pressure to create a children's minister to ensure policies are focused on the wellbeing of primary school children, advocates say, as those under 12 experience record anxiety and mental illness. [...] Asked who was responsible for five- to 12-year-olds, and whether a specific minister would be appointed, the government pointed to several actions that involved Aly, Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth, Indigenous Australians Minister Linda Burney, Education Minister Jason Clare and Assistant Minister for Mental Health Emma McBride.

Also reported by: [Sunday Age \(Melbourne\)](#).

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ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCCARTHY

Garma festival: Extraordinary entry prices for 'grassroots' Indigenous gathering in East Arnhem Land revealed

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 05/08/2023, Ashley Nickel

Australia's biggest celebration of Indigenous culture is charging up to \$5,000 per person for the four-day event. Tickets for the Garma festival on East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory start at \$1,650 for school students and reach \$5,000 for a corporate pass. [...] Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is attending Garma this year alongside Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus, Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney, Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health and Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy and Lingiari MP Marion Scrymgour.

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DEPARTMENT

Patients avoid GPs as cost-of-living pain swells

Sunday Age, General News, 06/08/2023, Henrietta Cook, Page 1

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standard consultations taking place in Victoria this year compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic. Melbourne GP Dr Roderick Aziz, who owns 45 practices in Victoria, estimates about a third of patients across his clinics are postponing appointments because of rising living costs. [...] The cost of seeing a GP continues to rise: fewer than 65 per cent of Australians now have all their appointments bulk-billed, federal Health Department data shows. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said it had never been harder or more expensive to see a doctor.

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Claims GPs may withhold scripts

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 06/08/2023, Linda Silmalis, Page 11

Pharmacists say a plan to help patients save money by allowing patients to receive two months supply of medication for chronic conditions in one visit could backfire with concerns GPs will hold back on writing out repeat scripts. From September, patients living with an ongoing health condition who are stable on their current treatment will be able to receive twice the medication for the cost of a single prescription.

Also reported by: [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(Adelaide\)](#), [Sunday Tasmanian \(Hobart\)](#).

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Doc Holiday: When will unvaccinated people be able to cruise from Australia?

Sunday Telegraph, Escape, 06/08/2023, Dilvin Yasa, Page 59

[...] All well and good, but confusing matters here is a Federal Government statement (found at health.gov.au) which says that Australians no longer need to be vaccinated to travel on cruise vessels – a Department of Health and Aged Care spokesman said they recommend travellers check with their cruise provider for up-to-date travel requirements for their vessel and destination.

Also reported by: [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(Adelaide\)](#), [Sunday Tasmanian \(Hobart\)](#).

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CORONAVIRUS

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

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POPULATION HEALTH

Alcoholic soft drink sparks complaint

Sun Herald, General News, 06/08/2023, Angus Thomson, Page 14

An alcoholic version of the popular soft drink Solo has sparked an official complaint over concerns the industry is leveraging a brand popular with children to market alcohol to underage drinkers. The Cancer Council of Western Australia lodged a formal complaint to the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme, saying the drink's manufacturer, Japanese alcohol giant Asahi, has breached the section of the code preventing alcoholic drinks from containing a "strong and evident appeal" to minors.

Also reported by: [Sunday Age \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#).

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Schools in dark over vaping suspensions

Sunday Mail Brisbane, General News, 06/08/2023, Stephanie Bennett, Page 8

The state's top education boss has sensationally admitted the department does not know how many kids are being suspended from school for vaping each year. Questioned about the state's ballooning substance abuse-related suspension numbers, Director-General Michael De'Ath said the department did not specifically measure how many of those were due to vaping.

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Horror of unknown

Sunday Mail Brisbane, General News, 06/08/2023, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 13

Frightened women with breast cancer or suspected breast cancer have reported to Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) that they are facing life-threatening delays in diagnoses or treatments. This comes as The Courier Mail revealed that Queensland hospital medics were concerned about long waits for follow-up ultrasounds for patients with suspected cancer.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).

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Restore centre funding - Labor

Sunday Tasmanian, General News, 06/08/2023, Sue Bailey, Page 8

Labor wants Health Minister Guy Barnett to provide "drop-in-the-ocean funding" to help children with hearing loss. Opposition disability spokesman Luke Edmunds has written to Mr Barnett asking him to review the decision not to provide Shepherd Centre with \$350,000 over three years.

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PRIMARY CARE

Trying our patients

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 06/08/2023, Brad Crouch, Page 1

Almost 9000 patients were forced to wait more than 24 hours in metropolitan public hospital emergency departments for a ward bed last financial, alarming new figures show. Patients lost in the limbo of clogged EDs have spiralled to an average of 24 every day, waiting more than a day for a ward place – up from seven a day five years ago.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).

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About time for some bipartisan health visions

Sunday Mail Adelaide, Editorials, 06/08/2023, Page 63

The blame game is getting as tiring as waiting in an emergency department for untold hours to be seen. Or being stuck in a ramped ambulance. Or being stuck in an ED for 24 hours or more waiting for a ward bed, as our report today shows has reached extraordinary levels.

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Ambulance ramping at SA hospitals up in July but still below record high

ABC Online, Other, 05/08/2023

The SA government has blamed an increase in ambulance ramping at the state's public hospitals throughout last month on an "incredibly busy" winter, and says short-term strategies are helping to manage the issue. The state's latest monthly statistics show patients were left waiting in ambulances for a combined 3,354 hours in July – almost 250 hours more than June's figure of 3,105.

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Call to deliver bubs' hospital as promised

Sunday Times, General News, 06/08/2023, Joe Spagnolo, Page 2

Liberal leader Libby Mettam has upped the ante in her fight to build a maternity hospital at Nedlands, starting a petition to stop the Cook Government building the facility at Murdoch. Ms Mettam has launched the petition, in conjunction with advocacy groups, to have the new hospital co-located with the Perth Children's Hospital at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre site in Nedlands.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Coping with the second response

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 06/08/2023, Kaitlyn Smith, Page 32

Frontline heroes protecting us from crime and there to comfort us at our most devastating moments are carrying a hidden burden of their jobs. Police sergeant Mark Thomas, firefighter Leah Rogers and cop-turned-paramedic Don Giles know all too well the mental toll of their jobs – and they're not alone. New figures from WorkCover reveal 565 police, firefighters, paramedics, SES, Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority and CFA members have lodged post-traumatic stress disorder claims since 2021.

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Hospital failures pushed my wife over edge

Sunday Mail Brisbane, General News, 06/08/2023, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 7

The first time Queensland's health system failed her she was at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. It was to terminate a pregnancy at 19 weeks but the baby was born alive and then shockingly left alone for seven minutes before dying without her parents to hold her. The torture of that horrific experience catapulted the mum into a mental health hell. Following that, the state's flailing health system failed Steven Morris and his wife for a second time.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).

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Northern Hospital Melbourne: Teen girl left shackled to a bed for 12 days and forced to wear a nappy after frightening mental health episode

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 05/08/2023, Sarah Liversidge

A 16-year-old girl was left strapped to a public hospital bed and wearing a nappy after a terrifying mental health episode. The young girl was kept in leg and wrist restraints in Melbourne's Northern Hospital in Epping, in Melbourne's north, for 12 days because there were no mental health beds available.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Ten years on, what has changed?

Sunday Canberra Times, General News, 06/08/2023, Lucy Bladen, Page 15

"From my point of view we have to crack this, we can't allow it to continue." These words were said by then-ACT chief minister and health minister Katy Gallagher in 2014. She said this in response to a damning report which found staff shortages, "acute distress" of health workers, unrealistic workloads and limited training in the obstetrics and gynaecology unit at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

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Health cheque

Sunday Tasmanian, General News, 06/08/2023, Sue Bailey, Page 1

Locum medical specialists, including psychiatrists, are being paid thousands of dollars a day to fly to Tasmania to treat patients in hospital. The situation is worst in the North-West with the Australian Medical Association estimating three in four doctors are often locums at the North-West Regional and Mersey Community hospitals.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).

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Hazel, 2, helps teach medical students

Sunday Tasmanian, General News, 06/08/2023, Sue Bailey, Page 8

For mother Kate Jones, helping future doctors learn about family life has been a fantastic experience. Ms Jones has taken part in University of Tasmania School of Medicine's kids and families program since daughter Hazel was born two years ago. The program, which has been operating for 20 years, is looking for families in greater Hobart who have a baby born between April and August this year to take part.

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

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HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

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SPORT

Experts amazed Bol labs so wrong

Sunday Age, General News, 06/08/2023, Michael Gleeson, Page 14

A group of Norwegian scientists analysing tests for the Peter Bol drug case say they were amazed that two World Anti-Doping Agency-accredited laboratories could conclude the Australian Olympian's first sample was positive. Four professors of biochemistry and molecular biology from Oslo – Jon Nissen-Meyer, Tore Skotland, Erik Boye and Bjarne Osterud – also said Bol was lucky the same laboratories in Australia and Germany did not analyse his second test sample.

Also reported by: [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#).

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Medicos vow to prevent a repeat

Sunday Mail Adelaide, Sport, 06/08/2023, Sam Landsberger, Page 34

The Port Adelaide concussion fiasco triggered a "significant reaction" among the AFL Doctors' Association, which has vowed to ensure "that sort of error never occurs again". Disappointed AFLDA president Barry Rigby declared: "Those players (Aliir Aliir and Lachie Jones) should have been removed permanently from the field of play, unequivocally – it's a category one concussion."

Also reported by: [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#).

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AFL NT scores \$4.7m in funding amid push for Top End team

Sunday Territorian, General News, 06/08/2023, Zizi Averill, Page 9

The AFL NT has won \$4.7m in funding to promote footy in community, with the hopes it will create a pipeline of young talent for a future Territory team. NT Senator Malarndirri McCarthy announced a \$2.5m federal funding announcement, as well as \$2.2m from the Australian Sports Commission, on the second day of the Garma Festival on Saturday.

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#).

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Gina's gold revelation

Sunday Times, General News, 06/08/2023, Alex Di Rosso and Hannah Cross, Page 7

Australia's richest woman Gina Rinehart has donated more than \$60 million to Australian Olympians over the past decade, new figures reveal. The mining magnate and current Western Australian of the Year, whose net worth is estimated to be close to \$40 billion, began supporting Australian athletes after the swim team won just one gold medal at the 2012 London Olympics.

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Football Australia sets sights on hosting 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup and 2034 FIFA World Cup

CODE Sports, Other, 05/08/2023, Erin Smith

The FIFA Women's World Cup still has two weeks to go but Football Australia is already looking ahead with CEO James Johnson revealing he hopes to hold the AFC Women's Asian Cup on home soil in 2026 and the Men's World Cup in 2034. Johnson, speaking exclusively to CODE Sports, said Football Australia had already lodged a bid and expression of interest for the Asian Cup – with the next step dependent on \$45 million of joint funding from the federal and state governments.

Also reported by: [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).

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Victorians are still waiting for answers to simple questions on the Commonwealth Games

ABC Online, Other, 05/08/2023, Richard Willingham

As far as Question Time questions go, it was a simple request – one without the normal political rhetoric designed to get a grab on the nightly news. "When did the government first become aware that it would have to cancel the Commonwealth Games?" Opposition Leader John Pesutto asked Deputy Premier Jacinta Allan on Tuesday. The only answer parliament got from Allan, who was the minister for the Commonwealth Games, was that Cabinet made the decision on a Monday afternoon and the public was told the next day.

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

'Yes vote will save the lives of kids'

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 06/08/2023, Clare Armstrong, Page 15

Indigenous Australians children suffering from a preventable heart disease are living "with a sword hanging over them," but a Voice could end their agony says prominent Yes campaigner Noel Pearson. The Cape York leader made a passionate case in favour of the referendum on the second day of Garma Festival at Gulkula, northeast Arnhem Land as he lamented the prevalence of rheumatic heart disease among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote areas.

Also reported by: [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(Adelaide\)](#).

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OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Gastroenteritis outbreak at St Therese's primary school hits 180 cases as Health hopes weekend will end outbreak cycle

Newcastle Herald, Other, 05/08/2023, Simon McCarthy

Parents of one of the Hunter's Catholic primary schools were urged to keep their children at home late last week as a significant outbreak of gastroenteritis required the help of the Hunter New England health district's public health unit to contain. Emails to parents from school principal Duilio Rufo, seen by the Newcastle Herald, note upwards of 180 cases of gastro among students at St Therese's Primary School at New Lambton on Friday, with as many as 22 teachers taking leave because of the outbreak.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Anger over Victoria's 17 'abortion deserts'

Sunday Age, General News, 06/08/2023, Rachel Eddie, Page 3

Hundreds of women in rural and regional Victoria have no access to surgical and medical terminations close to where they live, forcing some to travel for hours to get an abortion. Red tape to prescribe the abortion pill will be removed from this month, but reproductive healthcare providers say the change will not end the "postcode lottery" many women are faced with. [...] From this month, all doctors and nurse practitioners will be able to provide the termination pill under changes announced by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

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OFFICE FOR DRUG CONTROL

Australian kava company based in Fiji takes on 'muddy water' reputation with new flavours

ABC Online, Other, 05/08/2023, Kerry Staight

It's a non-alcoholic drink with sedative effects and an acquired taste that is sometimes described as similar to drinking muddy water. Now an Australian-owned business in Fiji is giving the popular South Pacific beverage kava a flavour makeover to try to broaden its appeal.

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