



# TODAY'S NEWS

Thursday, 30th November 2023

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Australian \(page 5\)](#)** reports that yesterday Prime Minister Anthony Albanese delivered a national apology to survivors and their families impacted by thalidomide. *Also reported by: [Canberra Times](#), [SBS](#), [The Guardian](#)*
- **[The Courier Mail \(page 1\)](#)** reports that the Queensland government has flagged immediate changes to neo-natal and maternity care following the death of a young baby hours after her birth. The changes would include additional training for staff in birthing wards and improved parental support.
- **[The Courier Mail \(page 1\)](#)** reports that health experts have warned that asthma deaths have returned to pre-pandemic levels, after falling due to reduced rates of respiratory illness. Concerns have also been raised about inconsistent use of over-the-counter preventative asthma medication.
- **[The Age \(page 4\)](#)** reports that the Victorian government is considering reforms to decriminalise cannabis for personal use, and implementing pill testing at festivals.
- **[The West Australian \(page 5\)](#)** reports that \$234 million in unclaimed funds will be paid back to the nearly one million Australians who don't have their valid details updated on myGov. *Also*

reported by: [ABC Online](#)

- **The Courier Mail (page 9)** reports that Royal College of General Practitioners has included a number of proposals in their first budget submission to the Queensland state government, such as converting all hard copies of child health records to a new digital system that would allow doctors instant access to up to date and accurate medical information.
- **ABC News** reports that the Therapeutic Goods Administration has told hospitals and clinics to stop using two saline products immediately, after they were linked to an Ralstonia outbreak that has been detected in a number of states and killed a Queensland patient.

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## MINISTER BUTLER

### Vapes to be scarce

CQ Today, General News, 29/11/2023, Kat Wong, Page 35

Australians will soon find it harder to access vapes, as the government attempts to prevent the industry creating a new generation of nicotine addicts. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler says the proliferation of vapes poses a major threat to Australia's successful tobacco control regulations.

*Also reported by: [7news.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#), [Hospital and Healthcare \(Online\)](#), [New Idea \(Online\)](#), [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#), [Brisbane Times \(Online\)](#), [The Age \(Online\)](#), [The Advocate \(Burnie\) \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [thedailyaus.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Time Out Sydney \(Online\)](#), [WA Today \(Online\)](#).*

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### Proposed medical workforce distribution review

Hamilton Spectator, General News, 29/11/2023, Page 6

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has welcomed a Federal Government review that will investigate how to more equitably distribute health professionals around Australia, agreeing that the current mechanisms are not working. [...] Announced last week by Health and Aged Care MP, Mark Butler, the review will look at how current policies and programs can be strengthened to make it easier to see a doctor, nurse or other health worker in the outer suburbs of major cities and in regional, rural and remote Australia.

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### Import crackdown on vapes

Kalgoorlie Miner, General News, 29/11/2023, Page 8

Vape users will not be caught in the crossfire of the Government's crackdown as bolstered regulations look to take aim at suppliers and importers. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler says the proliferation of vapes is a major threat to Australia's successful tobacco control regulations.

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### New genetic testing to help Riverland newborns

Murray Pioneer, General News, 29/11/2023, Page 19

Helping Riverland newborns with two major conditions will now be made easier with the introduction of new neonatal screening equipment. [...] "This historic approach to newborn screening with state and territory governments will deliver a nationally consistent approach to newborn bloodspot screening," Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said.

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### Full scope gets support

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 29/11/2023, Page 1

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has backed calls this week by physiotherapists and other allied healthcare professionals to work to their full scope of practice and training to help more patients. [...] "As Health Minister Mark Butler acknowledged only recently, pharmacists have long been calling for a shake-up of the health system to improve waiting times and hospital access.

## More eligible for new, free shingles jab

The Senior - WA, General News, 07/11/2023, Eileen Wood, Page 3

From November 1, people aged 65 and over and First Nations people over 50 became eligible for a free shingles vaccination with the latest vaccine, Shingrix. [...] "Older Australians will now have free access to the best protection against shingles through one of the most comprehensive and widely available vaccination programs in the world," Health Minister Mark Butler said.

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## PM apologises to thalidomide victims for 'one of the darkest chapters in Australia's medical history'

9News, Other, 29/11/2023, Mikala Theocharous

The drug was issued to pregnant women in the 1950s and early 1960s to treat a number of conditions, including morning sickness, insomnia and anxiety. [...] Minister for Health and Aged Care Mark Butler will dedicate a memorial for survivors at Kings Park in Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra tomorrow, Albanese said.

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## 'Doesn't make sense': community and patients rally to save East Devonport Medical Centre

Adelaide Now, Other, 29/11/2023, Simon Mcguire

Labor has launched a petition and a rally has been planned in an effort to save the a northern medical centre, which is set to close in February. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler acknowledged the decision to close the medical clinic was a commercial decision by a private provider but said the government would assist the East Devonport community.

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## New incentive for GPs to treat aged care residents

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 29/11/2023

A new model to encourage general practitioners to treat aged care residents will provide doctors \$300 a year for each eligible patient while the practice gets another \$130. [...] It was announced by Minister for Health and Aged Care Mark Butler last week during a keynote address to CEDA on building a stronger Medicare including the introduction of voluntary patient registration model MyMedicare.

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## Does bulk-billing help the patients who really need it?

Australian Doctor, Other, 29/11/2023, Antony Scholefield

Mark Butler promised to publish more detailed bulk-billing figures. AusDoc once dubbed the bulk-billing rate of a level B GP consultation one of Australia's greatest medical mysteries.

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## Movember's fight to stop years shaved off men's lives

Perth Now, Other, 29/11/2023, Jacob Shteyman

As Movember celebrates its 20th anniversary, men's health advocates have no illusions about the scale of the challenge that still lies ahead. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler will on Wednesday unveil the charity's new \$100 million institute, which aims to accelerate research into men's health issues such as mental health, prostate and testicular cancers and health literacy, and translate it into real world outcomes.

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## We stand ready to help more patients

Pharmacy ITK, Other, 29/11/2023

Pharmacy Guild National President, Professor Trent Twomey says physiotherapists, like pharmacists, can do much more for their patients. [...] As Health Minister Mark Butler acknowledged only recently, p

harmacists have long been calling for a shake up of the health system to improve waiting times and hospital access.

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## **Thalidomide was 'one of the darkest chapters in Australia's medical history': Albanese**

SBS, Other, 29/11/2023, Liz Maddock and Sam Dover

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has delivered a formal apology to thalidomide victims in parliament. The drug thalidomide was only on the market for a few years, but killed and caused birth defects in thousands of babies around the world in the 1950s and 60s. [...] Health minister Mark Butler says the government is also reopening the Thalidomide Survivors Support Program to make sure anyone who missed the previous opportunity to apply won't miss out on support.

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## **Revolutionising prostate cancer treatment: Government backs cutting-edge research**

Starts at 60, Other, 29/11/2023, Quintin Low

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed form of cancer in Australia and the risk of developing it only increases as men age. [...] "We are living through a supercharged period of discovery, especially in CAR T cell therapy," Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler said.

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## **Mayor calls for action to come from meeting about GP clinic's closure**

The Advocate (Burnie), Other, 29/11/2023, Libby Bingham

The closure of the East Devonport Medical Centre [EDMC] in February has prompted Health Minister Guy Barnett to convene a roundtable with key community and health stakeholders. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler who is responsible for primary health will not be at the meeting.

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## **Healius putting patients at risk: Minister**

The Medical Republic, Other, 29/11/2023

It's been a bad week for the country's second-largest pathology provider. Pathology provider Healius is putting patients at "increased clinical risk" by withholding patient data from the central My Health Record digital platform, says federal Health Minister Mark Butler.

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## **Federal Government announces additional aged care incentives for GPs signed up to MyMedicare**

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Caroline Egan

In a keynote address to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) last week, Health Minister Mark Butler announced a \$300 annual incentive per resident for GP visits to aged care homes as an additional benefit for general practices that sign up to the Government's new MyMedicare system.

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## **ABC News, News Breakfast, 29/11/2023, Lisa Millar and Emma Rebellato**

PM Anthony Albanese will deliver an apology to Australia's thalidomide survivors and their families today. Health Minister Mark Butler says many mothers and babies were let down by systemic failures.

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## **ABC South East NSW, 06:30 News, 29/11/2023**

The Department of Planning has issued new guidelines around the publication of domestic violence refuges details during the planning process. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says he's called an

urgent review of how the system works out, where healthcare workers are needed most and whether incentives are working.

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## Radio National, Breakfast, 29/11/2023, Patricia Karvelas / Hamish Macdonald

Interview with Peta Murphy, MP Dunkley, on Breast Cancer Network Australia launching a report calling on better collection and use of data on breast cancer stages and recurrence. Murphy says it is unbelievable that in this time of big data, we don't capture how many people have a recurrence of metastatic breast cancer or other cancers in this country. She adds she received a lot of support from Health Minister Mark Butler and Assistant Health Minister Ged Kearney in launching the report.

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## MINISTER WELLS

### Netball's missing \$17m

Herald Sun, Sport, 30/11/2023, Linda Pearce, Page 48

It was hailed as the largest single investment in Australian netball by a federal government. Announced in the marginal Melbourne seat of Chisholm in 2019 by thenprime minister Scott Morrison and sports minister Bridget McKenzie in the presence of senior netball officials and Diamond Madison Browne. [...] Yet significantly, the \$17m balance of a mix of operational and infrastructure capital is still undistributed, and the Federal Government remains in discussion with NA in relation to funding, according to Sports Minister Anika Wells' office.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#).

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### Stakeholders voice broad support for CHSP changeover extension

Community Care Review, Other, 29/11/2023, Christopher Kelly

Stakeholders have mostly reacted favourably to the announcement that plans for a single home care program have been delayed until 2027. [...] However, in a statement released on Tuesday evening by the office of the Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells, it has been revealed that CHSP by far the largest component of Support at Home won't be included in the program until "no earlier than 1 July 2027".

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### Support at Home Program pushed back to 2027

Inside Ageing, Other, 29/11/2023, Sean Mckeown

The new Support at Home Program will now be implemented in two stages starting from July 1, 2025, replacing the existing Home Care Packages (HCP) Program and Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC) Programme. [...] " Aged Care Minister Anika Wells The transition aims to improve access to services, equipment, and home modifications for older individuals, promoting health, activity, and social connection.

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### National Water Safety Day - Aussies Urged to Make Water Safety A Priority This Summer

Royal Life Saving Society Australia, Other, 29/11/2023

Ahead of National Water Safety Day, December 1, Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) has released its National Coastal Safety Report which highlights the importance of making water safety a priority. [...] Anika Wells MP says, "We are a nation that enjoys spending time in and around the water, particularly over summer.

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## Opinion: further delays to Support at Home shows the Govt is keen to get home care right

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Lauren Broomham

While Anika Wells' announcement that Support at Home will be rolled out in two stages has caught many in the sector off guard, the update is recognition that the Government understands that it can't risk getting the new Program wrong. As we report in this issue the Minister for Aged Care revealed on Wednesday night that only the Home Care Package (HCP) Program and the Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC) Programme will be rolled together into Support at Home from 1 July 2025, with the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) to transition "no earlier than 1 July 2027".

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## Fed Govt delays transition of CHSP to Support at Home to mid-2027

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Lauren Broomham

Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells (pictured) issued the surprise announcement on Wednesday night, revealing that the new Support at Home Program will now be delivered in two stages. Under the new plan, Support at Home will replace the existing Home Care Packages (HCP) Program and Short-Term Restorative Care (STRC) Programme from 1 July 2025.

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## ABC News, Afternoon Briefing, 29/11/2023, Greg Jennett / Matthew Doran

Panel discussion with Marielle Smith, Labor Senator and Andrew Bragg, Liberal Senator, regarding a proposal that insurance could be extended to cover aged care bills later in life. Bragg says Australia doesn't have any aged care insurance and it is one idea that they will be looking to develop. Jennett adds Aged Care Minister Anika Wells ordered the establishment of the Aged Care Taskforce to look at all funding options. Smith says Bragg's inquiry will surely build on the work of the Aged Care Taskforce and it's nice to see him doing something other than trying to raid young people's superannuation.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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## DEPARTMENT

### Transitional aged care beds open in Figtree

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 30/11/2023, Natalie Croxon, Page 8

Twenty transitional aged care beds will open at Figtree Private Hospital by the end of November, in a

bid to ease the pressure on hospital wards .The program means hospitals can safely discharge elderly patients who still need support but do not yet have a bed at an aged care home.

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## Care crisis worsens

The Senior - WA, General News, 07/11/2023, Eileen Wood, Page 4

Aged care beds are lying empty while elderly people languish in hospital unable to get a place as the staffing and funding crises in aged care worsen. [...] Department of Health and Aged Care data shows 53 per cent of aged care facilities are operating at a loss and job vacancies in the sector remain the highest of any industry.

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## Trish lives in constant pain because of thalidomide. Decades on, she'll hear an apology

SBS, Other, 29/11/2023, Emma Brancatisano

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will deliver a national apology to all Australians impacted by a "dark chapter in the history of our nation and the world". When Trish Jackson told her mother, aged 96, about the apology, her eyes lit up.

[Read More](#)

## After decades of pain, 'thalidomiders' welcome national apology but still mourn loved ones

The Guardian, Other, 29/11/2023, Josh Butler

"Gut wrenching," says Lisa McManus. She is looking for words to describe how she and other thalidomide survivors feel ahead of a historic apology by Anthony Albanese for government failings in the tragedy. She adds "angst", and "arduous". She is grateful for recognition of the medical disaster, and relieved that a decade of advocacy has come to fruition. Around 80 of the 146 recognised survivors will witness the apology in Canberra on Wednesday in what McManus hopes will be "a step in the healing process".

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## Lukewarm DoHAC response to AI Roadmap – in public, at least

The Medical Republic, Other, 29/11/2023

The Department of Health and Aged Care has responded to last week's launch of the National Policy Roadmap for AI in Healthcare but stopped short of endorsing any of the specific recommendations in the document. The roadmap, developed by the Australian Alliance for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare and other collaborators, presents 16 recommendations, chief among them the establishment of a National AI in Healthcare Council, minimum safety and quality standards and a plan for communicating the need for caution around generative AI.

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## Fed Govt to release tender for new single assessment process in January 2024

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Lauren Broomham

The Department of Health and Aged Care has flagged that the tender for the new single assessment system due to start from 1 July 2024, just seven months' away will be up for grabs in January next year. The Department issued an alert yesterday, revealing that the Request for Tender is expected to be released via AusTender and will be open for a minimum of six weeks.

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## ABC Riverina, 06:30 News, 29/11/2023

The Australian Dental Association is urging the Federal Government to create dental schemes for vulnerable people in a bid to reduce oral health deficiencies. According to the Department of Health and Aged Care, 30% of people delay or avoid seeing a dentist because of cost. ADA NSW President Dr Dominic Aouad says vulnerable communities do not have adequate access to dental care.

## CORONAVIRUS

### **Almost \$50b spent in fight against COVID-19**

Canberra Times, General News, 30/11/2023, Alex Mitchell, Page 8

Australia's health system dropped a whopping \$48 billion on the COVID-19 response, as authorities warn of an alarming drop off in vaccination rates. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found 7.2 per cent of overall health spending was focused on COVID between 2019-20 and 2021-22.

*Also reported by: [Daily Liberal \(Dubbo\)](#), [Central Western Daily \(Orange\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Newcastle\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Wollongong\)](#), [Bendigo Advertiser \(Bendigo\)](#), [Launceston Examiner \(Launceston\)](#), [Burnie Advocate \(Burnie\)](#).*

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### **500 new Covid cases reported in the Territory**

Northern Territory News, General News, 30/11/2023, Talara McHugh, Page 7

Covid is on the rise in the Territory with 496 confirmed cases recorded over the past four weeks compared to just 194 cases during the previous four-week period. Three people have died with 94 others hospitalised between October 27 and November 23, compared with 16 hospitalisations during the previous period.

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### **COVID-19 cases are again on the rise, so how long should you self-isolate now there are no requirements?**

ABC Online, Other, 29/11/2023, Gavin Coote

An uptick in COVID-19 cases has triggered a fresh warning for people to isolate if they're unwell and consider a booster vaccination, ahead of another feared "COVID Christmas". Australia is in the grip of an eighth wave of the virus, and NSW Health says community transmission in the state is "moderate to high"

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### **ABC health guru Norman Swan advises Australians to wear MASKS at Christmas and to have lunch outdoors as new Covid wave strikes the country**

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 29/11/2023, Zak Wheeler

Norman Swan has warned Australians to wear face masks this Christmas as the country enters its 8th wave of covid. The ABC health guru told The Project a 'Covid Christmas' is about to begin and that everybody should make sure they are up to date with vaccinations, avoid crowded spaces and mask-up in indoors.

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### **ABC News, News Breakfast, 29/11/2023, Lisa Millar and Emma Rebellato**

A new report claims Australia spent \$48b on the health system response to COVID-19 across three years. However, the analysis by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found the spike in health funding was lower than in many other OECD countries.

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### **SBS, World News Australia, 29/11/2023, Janice Petersen**

A review has found spending on the COVID-19 response in Australia reached \$47.9b with the health bill 2% higher than usual between 2020 and 2022. Australians also forked out an estimated \$878m from their own pockets on items like rapid antigen tests and face masks. The Australian Institute of



## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### **NSW police officer Kristian White charged with manslaughter over taser death of Clare Nowland at nursing home**

ABC Online, Other, 29/11/2023, Penny Timms

Charges against a police officer accused of fatally tasing a 95-year-old woman in a regional New South Wales nursing home have been upgraded to manslaughter. Clare Nowland, who had dementia, died in Cooma Hospital in May a week after allegedly being tasered by Senior Constable Kristian White at her Yallambee Lodge nursing home.

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### **Providers battle to recruit RNs**

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 29/11/2023, Christopher Kelly

Almost three-quarters of aged care providers are struggling to recruit and retain enough registered nurses, according to a new industry report. The findings commissioned by aged care consultants Ideagen, formerly CompliSpace, feature in the fourth annual Aged Care Workforce Report .

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### **Senior constable who Tasered 95-year-old granny Clare Nowland in NSW is charged with manslaughter**

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 29/11/2023, Olivia Day

The senior constable who Tasered 95-year-old great grandmother Clare Nowland has been charged with manslaughter. Ms Nowland, a dementia sufferer who weighs just 43kg, had been holding a steak knife when she 'slowly' approached a police officer at the Yallambee Lodge in southern NSW in May of this year.

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### **Police officer faces upgraded manslaughter charge over Clare Nowland's death by Taser**

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 29/11/2023, Jordan Baker

Charges against a police officer accused of Tasing an elderly woman who later died will be upgraded to manslaughter. Senior Constable Kristian White, 33, was called to Yallambee Lodge aged care home in Cooma on the morning of May 17 after reports that 95-year-old Clare Nowland, who had dementia, was holding a knife.

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### **Arrival of eight staff from the Philippines means regional aged care wing can reopen**

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Caroline Egan

Eleven aged care beds at Allawah Lodge aged care facility, in the Riverina town of Coolamon, 500KM southwest of Sydney, have been reopened with the arrival of eight aged care workers and nurses from the Philippines. The eleven beds, which were closed last September due to staff shortages, represent one third of Allawah Lodge's 33 beds in total.

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### **Talking point: rising insurance premiums another weight on sustainability for aged care providers**

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Caroline Egan

Every day, first thing, we spend 30 minutes discussing what is going on in the aged care space. This week, we are hearing about huge increases in insurance premiums, which come straight off providers' bottom line, compounding already concerning sustainability pressures.

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## **ANMF backs FWC independence in face of Government pressure to dampen aged care wage rises**

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Caroline Egan

Annie Butler, Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation (ANMF), which is seeking higher wages for aged care nurses based on work value reasons, said the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) decision should not be based on "capacity to pay". On Monday, we reported the Government has made a submission to the Fair Work Commission, cautioning further wages rises for aged care workers from the Work Value case could have a "broader impact" on wages in other sectors.

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## **Workers on skills shortage visas gain new pathway to permanent residency**

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Caroline Egan

From 25 November 2023, eligible workers on Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visas have access to a pathway to permanent residency through new migration laws, which were announced in April 2023. The new laws, which are contained in 'Migration Amendment (Expanding Access to Temporary Residence Transition Stream) Regulations 2023' legislation, also reduce the period of required employment from three to two years.

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## **Staff RAT testing prior to every shift: COVID-19 still challenging residential aged care**

The Weekly Source, Other, 29/11/2023, Caroline Egan

Residential aged care providers are returning to testing and mask-wearing as the so-called 'fifth wave' of COVID-19 causes a spike in outbreaks and case numbers around the country. In the week to 23 November, 25 aged care residents died from COVID-19, and there were 1,245 new residents infected with the virus.

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## **Australian police officer charged with manslaughter over death of 95-year-old woman tasered in nursing home**

Yahoo! News Australia, Other, 30/11/2023, Hilary Whiteman and Lianne Kolirin

An Australian police officer has been charged with manslaughter after he tasered a 95-year-old woman with dementia in a nursing home. Clare Nowland, a great-grandmother, died in hospital a week after she was tasered at the home in May.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

### **Service's new home after scandal**

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 30/11/2023, Brad Crouch, Page 15

BreastScreen SA finally has a new home after a mould scandal at its former Flinders St headquarters. The new \$6.5m Assessment Clinic and State Coordination Unit is at the former Wakefield Hospital site.

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### **Sunburn on the rise in young**

Daily Telegraph, General News, 30/11/2023, Madeleine Bower, Page 7

The number of Aussies going to hospital with severe sunburn has increased by nearly 30 per cent in the past year, with fewer young people keeping themselves sun safe, according to new data. NSW Health found that of the 818 patients checking in to hospital emergency departments with sunburn in the 2022/23 financial year, a 28 per cent increase on the previous year, the highest proportions were people aged five to 24years-old.

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## Fight HIV stigma by ditching laws based on fear, not science

West Australian, General News, 30/11/2023, Daniel Vujcich, Page 36

Forty years ago, the first case of an AIDS-related condition in WA was reported. The treating nurses at Royal Perth Hospital each wore three sets of gloves, and three sets of masks.

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## Ban on single-use vapes starts in Jan

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 29/11/2023

The first stage of Australia's new vaping reforms is set to commence on 01 Jan 2024 with further protections implemented over the course of next year. The Govt will implement a ban on the importation of disposable single-use vapes which is subject to legislative and administrative arrangements being approved, including by the Governor-General in the Federal Executive Council.

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## Queensland introduces Australian-first law to allow midwives and nurses to prescribe abortion pills

The Guardian, Other, 30/11/2023, Eden Gillespie

Queensland will become Australia's first jurisdiction to introduce a law to allow nurses and midwives to dispense pregnancy termination medication in a move expected to improve access in the state's "huge abortion deserts". In August the Therapeutic Goods Administration scrapped restrictions on the prescription of medical abortion pills, known as MS-2 Step, to be used in the early stages of pregnancy.

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# CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

## Asthma deaths on the rise

Courier Mail, General News, 30/11/2023, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 1

The number of Queenslanders who have died from asthma has soared, with experts blaming uncontrolled use of over-the-counter puffers. [...] Last year 55 females and 33 males lost their lives, according to new Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data by the National Asthma Council Australia.

Also reported by: [Townsville Bulletin \(Townsville\)](#), [Australian Journal of Pharmacy \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Guardian \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

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## Win for cancer patients

Daily Advertiser, General News, 30/11/2023, Dan Holmes, Page 1

Wagga cancer patients have been thrown a lifeline, with the NSW government announcing some treatments will be bulk-billed from next year. The commitment will cover radiotherapy, medical oncology and medical oncology outreach services.

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## Huge cost of back pain

Gold Coast Bulletin, General News, 30/11/2023, Page 7

Musculoskeletal disorders, such as back pain and osteoarthritis, accounted for the highest health spending in Australia among all disease groups in 2020-21, according to a new report. The Australian

Institute of Health and Welfare says \$14.7bn was spent on musculoskeletal disorders - 9.8 per cent of the total health spend. Cancer and other neoplasms were second-highest \$14.6bn.

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## 'Worst in the state'

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 30/11/2023, Ben Silvester, Page 1

Several studies have revealed south-west Victoria is the deadliest part of the state for a man to be diagnosed with prostate cancer. The research showed the five-year survival rate for patients diagnosed with prostate cancer in the south-west was 78 per cent compared with 95 per cent nationwide.

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## When Jonathan found a lump he went straight to the doctor - but he knows other men probably wouldn't

9News, Other, 29/11/2023, Sarah Swain

When research officer Jonathan Ly found a lump on his testicle while in the shower, he didn't hesitate to see a doctor. Just days later, he was diagnosed with stage one testicular cancer.

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## PRIMARY CARE

### Action after baby's death

Courier Mail, General News, 30/11/2023, Madura McCormack, Page 1

Immediate changes to improve maternity care in light of baby Thea Flasket's death hours after she was born have been announced by Health Minister Shannon Fentiman. But details around how the changes will be implemented or what they will practically achieve remain scant.

Also reported by: [7news.com.au \(Online\)](#), [ABC Online \(Online\)](#).

[Read Plain Text](#) [Read More](#)

### GP plan to help health system

Courier Mail, General News, 30/11/2023, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 9

Doctors are calling for hard copy child health records, which parents lose or forget to update, to be replaced by a digital system to allow medics to access instant, accurate health histories. [...] As the hospital system grapples with devastating ramping, bed shortages and delays, there has never been a more crucial time for the state to invest in general practice to keep people healthy in the community, RACGP Queensland Chair Cathryn Hester said.

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### Palliative care still necessary

Daily Telegraph, General News, 30/11/2023, Jason Kara, Page 21

This week voluntary assisted dying became legal in this state. But how voluntary is it? [...] Now it's no secret that Catholic health providers, just like the Australian Medical Association, have long opposed assisted dying.

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### Crane up to build hospital helipad

Hobart Mercury, General News, 30/11/2023, Alex Treacy, Page 7

Construction of Launceston General Hospital's new \$15m helipad has reached an important milestone with the installation of a new tower crane as part of the next stage of construction. Health Minister Guy Barnett said the Liberal state government was investing in the health infrastructure needed to support the state's healthcare workforce and deliver better care for patients.

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## Pharmacy prescribing trial expands

Barrier Truth, General News, 29/11/2023, Jason Irvine, Page 6

From late March 2024, people suffering from certain skin conditions including impetigo (school sores) and shingles will, as part of the state government's pharmacy prescribing trail, be able to access prescription medicines easier.

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## Hospital ramping is just taking the p\*\*\*

Gold Coast Bulletin, General News, 30/11/2023, Paul Weston and Amaani Siddeek, Page 4

Patients stuck waiting at the city's busiest emergency department were forced to use urine bottles in public areas as most of the city's ambulance fleet was ramped at the Gold Coast University Hospital. State parliament has been told of "shocking and disturbing scenes" on Monday at Australia's busiest emergency department.

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## GPs will keep buprenorphine direct administration rights for another seven months

Australian Doctor, Other, 29/11/2023, Rachel Fieldhouse

Dr Hester Wilson says the Federal Government should find a permanent solution. [...] "These patients have complex lives, and the logistics of getting \$7.30, going to the GP, going to the pharmacy and paying, and then going back to the GP for the injection are difficult," said Dr Wilson, chair of the RACGP Specific Interests Addiction Medicine group.

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## Doctors alarmed by dollar-obsessed managers undermining care, inquiry told

Australian Doctor, Other, 29/11/2023, Carmel Sparke

Meanwhile, doctors' ideas for more efficient patient care are being ignored, anaesthetist Associate Professor Ross Kerridge said in his inquiry submission. A respected anaesthetist has described his frustrations with a health system that has increasingly sidelined the wisdom of doctors in favour of measures that lead to waste and poor patient outcomes.

[Read More](#)

## Concerns raised about access to voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 29/11/2023, Aisling Brennan

Some hospitals in Western Australia have refused to transfer patients who have requested voluntary assisted dying, a new report has revealed. The annual VAD WA Board report found the obstruction had also caused distress to grieving families going through the process.

Also reported by: [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

## Voluntary Assisted Dying board chair Scott Blackwell says religious hospitals blocking access to procedure

West Australian, Other, 29/11/2023, Jake Dietsch

Some hospitals have refused to transfer patients who have requested voluntary assisted dying causing additional distress to grieving families, according to the chair of the board that oversees the newly legalised procedure. VAD chair Scott Blackwell wrote in the board's annual report, tabled in November, that it was "disappointing" that "individuals or organisations" had obstructed people who had tried to access assisted dying.

[Read More](#)

## Margaret River doctors call for hospital to close birthing suites amid obstetric safety concerns

A group of the most prominent South West doctors have pleaded with health authorities to stop allowing elective births at Margaret River Hospital. In a letter obtained by the Times and signed by nine local medicos, the group pleaded with the WA Country Health Service to close the hospital, flagging major safety concerns they believed were putting lives and reputations at risk.

[Read More](#)

## **Margaret River doctors' plea outlines safety, legal risks with birth delivery changes at hospital**

West Australian, Other, 29/11/2023, Warren Hately

Local doctors told the Times they were uncomfortable discussing the concerns outlined in the letter except to say colleagues felt the correspondence was necessary amid uncertainty about the WA Country Health Service's plans for the local hospital. It was also feared any closure of obstetric services was part of a gradual shift to downgrade services in Margaret River.

[Read More](#)

## **Channel 7, Seven News, 29/11/2023, Peter Mitchell**

Vic Premier Jacinta Allan is backing an urgent review into a Ballarat mum's ambulance nightmare. Doctors were forced to amputate her leg after a traumatic four-hour wait for paramedics. Allan says Ambulance Victoria has already extended their apology. Over the past year, paramedics made it to 62.8% of urgent Code One call-outs within 15 minutes below the target of 85%. The Ambulance Union says the system is under extreme pressure as Vic paramedics responded to 96,000 Code One cases between July and September 2023.

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## **Channel 7, Sunrise, 29/11/2023, Natalie Barr and Matt Shirvington**

Interview with Dr Ginni Mansberg, Sunrise GP, regarding the demand for GPs that is outstripping supply, with the Australian Medical Association estimating a shortage of 860 GPs across the country. It now leads to a backlog of our hospitals, with people presenting to emergency departments with illnesses that would normally be treated by their local doctors. Mansberg says there are supply and demand issues happening everywhere.

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## **ABC Radio Darwin , Morning Show, 29/11/2023, Adam Steer**

Interview with Robyn Cahill, Chief Executive, Palmerston GP Superclinic, regarding the Federal Government funding 50 urgent care clinics across the country in the hope of taking some pressure off emergency departments. One of those urgent care clinics opened in Palmerston at the start of October. Cahill says they had a pretty slow start which is not surprising because people need to learn about a service, know where it is and understand what it can be used for. She adds it's been very busy for them lately.

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## **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION**

### **\$2.38m bereavement trial**

Cairns Post, General News, 30/11/2023, Sandhya Ram, Page 2

A \$2.38m initiative to help bereaved families and communities after a person dies by suicide will be trialled in select parts of Far North Queensland. Indigenous suicide prevention service Thirilli Ltd will be delivering the trial in Coen and three First Nations communities in Far North Queensland, using principles of self-determination.

[Read Plain Text](#) [Read More](#)

## Sharing his life struggle New centre for support

Cairns Post, General News, 30/11/2023, Sandhya Ram, Page 8

A Cairns man with lived experience of suicidal ideation and depression is one of many voices from the community being consulted in the development of the region's newest mental health support service. Greg Curtis-Hill said he was excited to be involved in the process for developing Head to Health, an adult mental health support centre due to open next year in Cairns.

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## Advocates criticise police investigation of Bridget Flack, while families detail devastating impacts of suicide deaths

ABC Online, Other, 29/11/2023, Kate Ashton

An advocate has labelled police actions during the search for a missing transgender woman a "terrible miscarriage of justice," while grieving family members have provided devastating accounts of the impact of their loved one's deaths during a coronial inquest.

[Read More](#)

## New framework launched to enhance well-being of the youth in Australia

SBS, Other, 29/11/2023, Sam Dover

A new national framework tracking the health and well-being of young people across Australia has been launched to encourage substantial improvements before 2030. The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth have come together to caution that Australia's youth are experiencing a decline in their health and well-being.

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## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

### Channel 7, Seven News, 29/11/2023, Max Fatcher and Sharyn Ghidella

A landmark legislation will be introduced to Parliament aimed at making maternity wards safer in Queensland. It follows a long-running campaign by midwives as they struggle to manage their workloads.

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Paramedics seeing red

Western Advocate, General News, 30/11/2023, Rachel Chamberlain, Page 1

From Friday, paramedics in Bathurst will be ditching their official uniforms and donning red T-shirts. Emblazoned on the back will be the words "NSW Ambulance Driver", a reflection of what they could be reduced to as NSW continues to lag behind other states in paying their paramedics for their skills.

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### Health union fears draft laws could see Tasmanian firefighters doing the work of ambulance paramedics

ABC Online, Other, 29/11/2023, Liz Gwynn

Unions are concerned firefighters could soon be asked to attend medical emergencies to relieve pressure on Tasmania's strained ambulance service a claim rejected by the government. Under the state government's draft Fire and Emergency Services Bill, one of the functions of the Tasmania Fire

Service would be to assist in the provision of medical assistance, and provide medical assistance, if required.

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## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

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## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

### Unclaimed funds up for grabs

West Australian, General News, 30/11/2023, Page 5

Nearly one million Australians are eligible to get back millions of dollars in unclaimed Medicare benefits before Christmas. The Federal Government has announced \$234 million in unclaimed funds will be paid back to people who don't have their valid details updated on myGov.

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### Medicare millions unclaimed

Cairns Post, General News, 30/11/2023, Page 4

Nearly one million Australians are eligible to claim back millions of dollars in unclaimed Medicare benefits before Christmas. The federal government has announced that \$234m in unclaimed funds will be paid back to people who don't have their valid details updated on myGov.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Townsville\)](#).

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### Unclaimed Medicare benefits totalling more than \$230 million yet to be handed out

ABC Online, Other, 29/11/2023, Stephanie Borys

Nearly a million Australians who have gone to the doctor have not got their refund from Medicare because their bank details are wrong. Unclaimed benefits worth \$234 million are yet to be handed out because Medicare has nowhere to send the cash to.

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### Bendigo Health staff survey reveals safety concerns over electronic patient records

ABC Online, Other, 29/11/2023, Anna Chisholm

"Massive safety risk", "threat to patient safety", and "moral distress" are phrases used by unidentified Bendigo Health workers responding to an "experience survey" about the service's Electronic Patient Record (ePR) system. The ABC has obtained a copy of the survey report prepared by KLAS research, which was shared with some staff internally last Thursday.

[Read More](#)

### You might have a share in Medicare's unclaimed millions. Here's what to check

SBS, Other, 29/11/2023

A Christmas bonus could be on the cards for nearly a million Australians who have yet to receive the Medicare benefits they are owed. Nearly one million Australians are owed a share of unclaimed Medicare benefits totalling \$234 million.

Also reported by: [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#).



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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

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## SPORT

### Swimming honoured at AIS awards ahead of Olympics

Yahoo! News Australia, Other, 29/11/2023, Roger Vaughan

World record-breaking Australian swimmers Mollie O'Callaghan and Kaylee McKeown have headlined the honours as their sport dominated the AIS Performance Awards. Swimming won six of the 13 award categories on Wednesday night at the Australian Institute of Sport annual awards function in Melbourne.

Also reported by: [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#).

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

### Drug trial for MS

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 29/11/2023

The first-ever adaptive clinical trial for Australians living with multiple sclerosis (MS) will seek to reverse neurological damage caused by the progressive condition. With an initial \$4m in funding, the trial, commencing in Jan 2024, will enable researchers to investigate the potential benefits of several pharmacy medications simultaneously, giving hope to those with one of the most debilitating forms of MS who currently have extremely limited treatment options.

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### Ministers will no longer approve Australian Research Council grants under bid to stop 'political interference'

The Guardian, Other, 29/11/2023, Caitlin Cassidy

Ministers would no longer be responsible for approving competitive grants as part of legislation aimed at ending years of political interference in the Australian Research Council (ARC). The bill, to improve the governance and independent decision-making of the ARC, was introduced on Wednesday after a review into the body which found trust had been "dramatically eroded" by controversial grant decisions made by former Coalition ministers.

[Read More](#)

### Channel 10, 10 News First, 29/11/2023, Estelle Lewis

MS Australia is today announcing the first-ever adaptive clinical trial for Australians living with progressive multiple sclerosis. It will see researchers investigate the potential benefits of several

medications simultaneously, including metformin, typically used to treat type two diabetes and alpha lipoic acid, a health food supplement.

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

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## OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

### Parts of the Hunter named in risk area for mosquito disease

Newcastle Herald, General News, 30/11/2023, Damon Cronshaw, Page 10

Residents in the Upper Hunter local government area can now receive a free Japanese encephalitis vaccine, with the area being designated a risk for the disease. NSW Health has expanded access to the free vaccine to a further 14 areas that border existing eligible areas in regional NSW.

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### National engineered stone ban closer with WA backing

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 29/11/2023, Aaron Bunch

The West Australian government has thrown its support behind a proposed ban on silicosis-causing engineered stone, paving the way for a likely nationwide prohibition of its use. Safe Work Australia last month recommended that engineered stone products be prohibited to prevent workers from developing deadly diseases and cancers.

Also reported by: [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [The New Daily \(Online\)](#).

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## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### Albanese says sorry to thalidomide survivors

The Australian, General News, 30/11/2023, Jess Malcolm, Page 5

Anthony Albanese has delivered a national apology to survivors and their families impacted by the thalidomide tragedy, calling it "one of the darkest chapters in Australia's medical history". The Prime Minister on Wednesday offered a "full, unreserved and overdue" apology to all thalidomide survivors, their families, loved ones and careers and announced that Labor would restart financial support for affected people. [...] The tragedy led to the establishment of the Therapeutic Goods Administration, which is now responsible with testing and approving drugs to ensure they are safe for use.

Also reported by: [The Australian \(Online\)](#).

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### 'The system failed you, we are sorry'

Canberra Times, General News, 30/11/2023, Page 11

Anthony Albanese has offered an "unreserved and overdue" apology to survivors of thalidomide, saying governments have let down those affected by the drug. Marking 62 years to the day that the morning sickness drug for pregnant women was withdrawn from sale in Australia because of causing birth defects, Mr Albanese apologised to the survivors of the pharmaceutical disaster.

[Read Plain Text](#) [Read More](#)

## Albo formal apology to thalidomide survivors

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 30/11/2023, Courtney Gould, Page 9

Australian thalidomide survivors and their families have received a formal apology for the federal government's role in the tragedy. [...] The crisis led to the formation of the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Townsville\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Yahoo! News Australia \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#).

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## Saline products linked to interstate contamination and bacteria outbreak 'quarantined' at SA hospitals

ABC Online, Other, 29/11/2023

Saline products suspected of causing dozens of infections interstate, as well as a patient's death in Queensland, have been detected among medical supplies at several hospitals in South Australia, health authorities say. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration has told hospitals and clinics to stop using two InterPharma sodium chloride products immediately, after an outbreak first detected in New South Wales.

Also reported by: [Znews.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Australian Journal of Pharmacy \(Online\)](#), [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#).

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## TGA investigates duloxetine contamination

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 29/11/2023

Sponsors report N-nitroso-duloxetine levels in some duloxetine medications are currently above "acceptable intake" limits. Patients are being urged not to stop taking duloxetine medications while the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) investigates reports of contamination.

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## Heart Foundation commends new initiatives to curb e-cigarette use

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 29/11/2023

The Heart Foundation has welcomed the Australian Government's commitment to new vaping reforms designed to curb e-cigarette use in Australia. [...] A requirement for therapeutic vape importers and manufacturers to notify the Therapeutic Goods Administration of their product's compliance with the relevant product standards.

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## 'We are sorry': PM leads apology to Thalidomide survivors

The New Daily, Other, 29/11/2023

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has issued a national apology to all Australians affected by the "thalidomide tragedy". Wednesday's statement in the House of Representatives came 50 years after the global pharmaceutical disaster that caused distress, disability and death for so many families.

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## OFFICE FOR DRUG CONTROL

### Pill-test push as ALP 'open' to dope debate

Age, General News, 30/11/2023, Rachel Eddie, Page 4

Pill testing could be trialled over next year's music festival season if three minor Victorian parties get their way today, after the state government announced it was open to talks about decriminalising personal use of cannabis. Mental Health Minister Ingrid Stitt said yesterday the government was

"amenable" to engaging with Legalise Cannabis, experts and the community on whether to allow adults to carry small quantities of the drug, signalling the potential for significant drug reform.

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## 'Be prepared' to best enjoy the experience

Ballarat Courier, General News, 30/11/2023, Melanie Whelan, Page 3

Festival pill testing has become a headline act in the nation's capital at the weekend, but it will be a different safety vibe when Spilt Milk moves to Ballarat. The sold-out event at Victoria Park on December 2 comes amid ongoing lobbying from dozens of frontline health organisations, including Ballarat Community Health, for the state government to introduce drug checking and an enhanced public alert system through the use of mobile and fixed pill testing.

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## Carr calls for courage ahead of next drug summit

Canberra Times, Other, 29/11/2023

Bob Carr will reunite with other key players behind a landmark drug summit to urge current leaders to display the same courage for reform shown 24 years ago. The landmark five-day summit in 1999 changed perceptions of illicit drug use and established the political backing for the creation of Kings Cross' life saving, medically supervised injecting centre.

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## NSW MP Jeremy Buckingham flashes weed on parliament floor while calling for cannabis legalisation

The Courier Mail, Other, 29/11/2023, Jessica Wang

A NSW MP has become the first politician to produce a bud of cannabis on the floor of parliament, while introducing a bill to legalise weed. There is growing pressure on the New South Wales government to bring forward its proposed drug summit.

[Read More](#)

## Channel 7, Seven News, 29/11/2023, Mark Ferguson

A world-first cannabis pill is being trialled in Australia and it could bring relief to millions of people living with chronic pain. If successful, it will be available over the counter. The new CBD pill boasts a faster onset of effects lasting around six hours. A landmark phase three clinical trial is set to investigate whether the pill does provide pain relief, hoping to convince regulators and the medical community.

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