



TODAY'S NEWS

Sunday, 24th December 2023

A more automated version of *Today's News* will be provided on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. It will still capture the main media stories, but will not include an Executive Summary. The report will be emailed to subscribers at the later time of 7:30 am.

[Minister Butler](#) | [Minister Wells](#) | [Assistant Minister McBride](#)
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LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Sun Herald \(page 1\)](#) reports that GPs and immunisation advocacy groups have alleged that some clinics are facing shortages of the shingles vaccine Shingrex, which comes as Federal Health Minister Mark Butler in October announced free access to the vaccine for over five million people over 65.
- The [Sunday Telegraph \(page 13\)](#) reports that Federal Health Minister Mark Butler is considering future funding options for brain cancer research and clinical trials as advocates call for an additional \$21 million in funding.
- The [Sunday Canberra Times \(page 1\)](#) reports that the Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry has called for more Australian bone marrow donors to address the growing blood cancer rates, with only 70 Australians able to donate to 1000 patients.
- The [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(page 1\)](#) reports that SA Health has confirmed that around 150 people may have been exposed to tuberculosis after a patient tested positive at the Lyell

McEwin Hospital; however, there have currently been no other confirmed positive cases.

- The [Sunday Times \(page 1\)](#), reports that new figures released by WA Health have found that Covid hospital admissions in WA have risen by 41 per cent, with concentrations of strains of coronavirus found in Perth wastewater also rising sharply.
- The [Sunday Herald Sun \(page 1\)](#) reports that growing levels of anxiety and other mental health issues have lowered retention rates among secondary school students by 14 per cent, causing advocates to call for an expansion of mental health services.

MINISTER BUTLER

GPs forced to ration shingles vaccine

Sun Herald, General News, 24/12/2023, Mary Ward and Rachel Eddie, Page 1

Seniors wanting to receive the free shingles vaccine the federal government promised would be available last month have struggled to find an appointment, as GPs ration scarce supplies of the shot. While state governments have restricted clinics to between five and 50 doses of the vaccine a month, the federal government maintains there is no shortage. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said 5 million over 65s and immunocompromised people would be able to access a free vaccine to prevent shingles from November 1.

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

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I'll think about it

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 24/12/2023, Cydonee Mardon, Page 13

Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says he is weighing up his options for funding into brain cancer research and clinical trials. After several meetings with devastated parents who have already lost children but are fighting for others, and mums and dads desperate to give their dying children a chance, the minister told the Sunday Telegraph that "the government has this on their radar".

Also reported by: [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#).

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New PBS drug to save thousands

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 24/12/2023, Brad Crouch, Page 17

New Year's Day will change the life of McLaren Flat artist and blood cancer sufferer Jen Wright. For the cost of a treatment drug will drop from \$96,000 to \$31.60 due to its listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said the federal government was committed to making medicines cheaper for Australians.

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

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The bulk-billing urgent care clinics now open in Hunter-Central Coast area

Newcastle Herald, Other, 23/12/2023, Damon Cronshaw

More than 1600 patients have accessed in the Hunter New England/Central Coast primary health network since they began to open in October. The clinics have typically been treating upper respiratory infections, acute ear pain and rapid onset rashes. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said the Lake Haven clinic was the final one to open in NSW.

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MINISTER WELLS

Hope Aged Care lags in ratings

Swan Hill Guardian, Other, 23/12/2023, Phoebe Doyle

Swan Hill's Hope Aged Care has been listed as one of 11 aged care facilities in Victoria as needing improvements based on the government's latest star ratings. As of December 12, Hope Aged Care had an overall star rating of just two out of five, flagging the need for improvement based on a complex algorithm of quality measures. [...] Aged Care Minister Anika Wells said the data had shown a significant lift in the standard of aged care across the country.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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DEPARTMENT

Security agencies mobilise to stem attack on operator of 10 hospitals and 26 aged-care facilities

The Courier Mail, Other, 23/12/2023, Sarah Ison, Joseph Lam and David Murray

Alarm bells have been set off across the nation amid the breach at St Vincent's, operator of 10 hospitals and 26 aged-care facilities in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. [...] "My team is working with Services Australia, the Department of Health and Aged Care, and relevant state and territory agencies to ensure a co-ordinated government response to this incident and to mitigate any flow-on effects," Mr Hansford said.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Sky News Australia \(Online\)](#).

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CORONAVIRUS

Proper way to tackle vaccine hesitancy

Sunday Telegraph, Editorials, 24/12/2023, Page 84

One of the lingering side effects of the Covid pandemic is a mistrust of vaccinations. The debate about the effectiveness of the various Covid treatments has had the double effect of inflaming doubts in those

who are predisposed to getting their children immunised and empowering the dishonest antivaccination organisations to ramp up their campaigns of misinformation.

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COVID wave fears

Sunday Times, General News, 24/12/2023, John Flint, Page 1

Hopes the worst of the current COVID wave was over and that thousands of West Australians would be spared sickness at Christmas have been dashed. New hospital admissions increased 41 per cent in the latest weekly figures released by WA Health.

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4BC, Weekend Breakfast, 23/12/2023, Olympia Kwitowski

News Illness is sweeping Queenslanders. Thousands are struck down with Covid and influenza just days out from Christmas.

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Aged-care homes make the grade

Sunraysia Daily, Other, 23/12/2023, Wade Stephens

Every aged-care facility in Mildura has achieved at least a three-star overall rating, according to the latest My Aged Care review. The Federal Government grading system, which updated most recently on December 12, shows quarterly assessments of compliance, staffing ratios, quality measures and residents' experiences at aged care homes across Australia.

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Channel 7, Seven News (Weekend), 23/12/2023, Mark Ferguson

The Federal Government has warned aged care centres that are below standard could be shut down, with hundreds of residents experiencing poor conditions. Mark Butler, Health Minister, says the transparency and accountability is already driving better quality care.

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POPULATION HEALTH

A welcoming hand reaches out to city's homeless

Sunday Age, General News, 24/12/2023, Jewel Topsfield, Page 4

Raymond Baker knows what it's like to wake up on Christmas morning in a car or on the street or on a friend's couch. He's been homeless for long stints since his mother died in 1998. [...] " One in 67 Victorians received assistance from homelessness services in 2022-23, according to an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report released this month - higher than the national rate of one in 95.

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

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Zeferino's Story

When two-year-old Zeferino Morales bumped his head on a family holiday to Noosa his parents' world was turned upside down. Zeferino fell and hit his right eye. While it didn't seem like a serious fall, a "huge" bruise developed on the right side of his face. His parents Ingrid and Jayson took him to their local GP, who performed a blood test. Zeferino was diagnosed with Severe Aplastic Anaemia a condition that occurs when the body stops producing enough new blood cells.

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Ultimate gift

Sunday Canberra Times, General News, 24/12/2023, Lucy Bladen, Page 1

Courtney Hughes normally has a "typical Aussie Christmas" at her family's farm on the far South Coast. "Big family, lots of food, outdoor cricket, we throw floaties in the dam," she said. But this Christmas will be different. It will be in the cancer ward at Canberra Hospital. "I'd do anything to be home but I can't be silly. I've got to put my trust in the doctors," Ms Hughes said.

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

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Low bowel cancer screening rates spark concern from doctors

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 23/12/2023, Angus Thomson

When Andrea Hogan went into hospital for a colonoscopy the week of her 40th birthday, she knew almost immediately that something was wrong. "As I was in recovery, my [gastroenterologist] walked in and said, 'I need to talk to you,' " she said. [...] It was now up to the federal government to fund and implement the recommendation, said Bowel Cancer Australia chief executive Julien Wiggins.

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The easy blood test set to change type 1 diabetes diagnosis

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 23/12/2023, Robyn Riley

An at-home type 1 diabetes test pioneered by Melbourne scientists is set to revolutionise global screening of the chronic disease. In a world first, a trial of the simple finger prick blood test confirms it works, is accurate and holds the promise of a cheap, reliable population screening test that could be available within two years.

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

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'Ticking time bomb': Pregnant mum's harrowing discovery

The Courier Mail, Other, 23/12/2023, Jessica Smith

When Nicole, a fit and healthy 30-year-old woman, suddenly passed out at 22 weeks pregnant, she had no idea she was a "ticking time bomb." Nicole was 30 years old and 22-weeks pregnant when she suffered an unexpected stroke. The devastating event claimed the life of her unborn baby, Ned, and nearly her own. Fit and healthy, there were no signs pointing to what would unfold on March 3, 2020. The primary school teacher had the day off work and was about to cook a meal for a family in need.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#).

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More funding, research needed for genetic condition neurofibromatosis to help those diagnosed understand their future

ABC Online, Other, 23/12/2023

Archie Black, 4, is one of 13,000 Australians living with a rare genetic condition, but his diagnosis gives him no certainty for the future. "Neurofibromatosis is a hard word to say, but it's even harder to live with," his dad Tom Black said. People with neurofibromatosis face problems with their sight, hearing, brain function, mobility and have an increased risk of cancer and chronic pain.

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Christmas lights can bring joy to Australian suburbs, but for some they pose a health risk

ABC Online, Other, 23/12/2023, Gabriela Rahardja

When suburban homes light up Christmas decorations as part of an annual December tradition, it can be a joyful time for the community. For Jessi Hooper, who has a rare neurological condition, it's a cue to stay behind closed curtains. Ms Hooper lives with photosensitive epilepsy, which can cause her body to go into seizure when triggered by bright flashing lights.

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'Ordinary kid' who complained of tummy pain was soon battling aggressive stage four cancer

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 23/12/2023, Zak Wheeler

An 'ordinary' seven-year-old boy found out he had stage four cancer after he complained of a simple belly ache after a day of play. Raf spent his seventh birthday running around with friends and family before telling his mum, Natalie Oaten, that his stomach hurt in October 2021.

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Channel 10, 10 News First (Weekend) , 23/12/2023, Chris Bath

A newly developed at-home type one diabetes test is set to revolutionise diagnosis. The innovative test uses a finger prick sample that is taken at home and mailed to a lab.

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PRIMARY CARE

Navigating the vexed world of IVF influencers

Sunday Age, General News, 24/12/2023, Wendy Syfret, Page 12

Ivf treatment is difficult enough as it is so do IVF influencers ease the pain or make it worse? Wendy Syfret reports. Amy Maree always knew that if she wanted to have a family, she'd need help. Having suffered from chronic endometritis since adolescence, she'd been told by doctors she'd struggle to conceive naturally.

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Autopsy limbo on bubs

Sunday Mail Brisbane, General News, 24/12/2023, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 9

Queensland mums who have suffered a stillbirth are waiting up to two years for autopsy results, leaving many in limbo, scared to have another child and even blaming themselves for the traumatic loss. The government has acknowledged a shortage of perinatal pathologists is blowing out wait times. But angry maternity advocates are lobbying the government to "stop the torture" and have written to Health Minister Shannon Fentiman outlining cases of mums who have lost full-term babies and many months later are still struggling mentally and unable to grow their families as they wait for answers.

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

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Paramedics slam government's ED plan

Sunday Examiner, General News, 24/12/2023, Stephanie Dalton, Page 2

Fed-up paramedics have slammed the government's plan to remedy the state's worsening health crisis. Health and Community Sector Union (HACSU) members criticised the state government's interim action plan to improve Tasmania's public hospital Emergency Departments, calling it a "joke".

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Devastated dad joins e-scooter Christmas call as alarming number of

patients hospitalised after accidents

West Australian, Other, 23/12/2023, Hannah Cross

Parents are being urged to avoid buying e-scooters for their kids for Christmas, with revelations a dozen patients a week are being admitted to a Perth hospital with serious injuries sustained in accidents. [...] Australian Medical Association WA president Michael Page joined Dr Weber's plea to put safety first over the festive season.

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Record numbers seeking food, shelter at Adelaide's Hutt Street Centre this Christmas

Cairns Post, Other, 23/12/2023, Lauren Novak

Not long ago, many of these South Australians were comfortable, warm and well-fed. As Christmas looms, all of that has changed for hundreds. [...] Matt Loxton Australian Medical Association SA president John Williams said there was "at least a 12 week wait" to see a psychologist through the public health system.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#)

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

For many women, 'magic-making' is never done

Sun Herald, General News, 24/12/2023, Wendy Tuohy, Page 14

In a season when many Australian women are pushed to the edge of burnout or over it Leah Ruppanner has come as close as it gets to perfect stress-prevention. "I don't do 'magic-making' at Christmas: zero," says the sociologist, who researches the heavy toll, mostly on women, of the so-called mental load of orchestrating family life including special events such as Christmas.

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School dropouts alarm

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 24/12/2023, Rebecca Borg and Suzan Delibasic, Page 1

More Victorian students are dropping out of school now than at any point in the past decade. Experts say more effort is needed to care for secondary students' mental health in the wake of the pandemic. Retention figures, released as part of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' February school census, show 14 per cent of Victorian students who started year 7 in 2018 had dropped out before year 12.

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My son's heart is ripped apart

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 24/12/2023, Paul Starick and Tara Miko, Page 11

The woman who would have been the future mother-in-law of slain property manager Julie Seed is begging for action to improve the state's mental health system. In an open letter, Karen Need the mother of Chris Smith, Ms Seed's fiance of more than a year urges reform to prevent others from suffering "this unimaginable pain" after she was attacked and killed at her Plympton workplace.

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I fear my Chad might do this

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 24/12/2023, Lauren Novak, Page 11

The mother of a mentally ill teenager fears her son could end up in a similar situation to alleged murderer Shaun Michaels Dunk because of a "failing" mental health system. When she heard police had arrested Dunk for alleged murder just hours after he left a mental health centre, Riverland mother Nicole thought "that could have been my son".

Also reported by: [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Northern](#)

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Increasing pressure on Rowland to reach decision on gambling ad ban

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 23/12/2023, Olivia Ireland

Communications Minister Michelle Rowland is under increasing pressure from all sides of the gambling debate to reveal whether she will accept a parliamentary inquiry's call for an advertising ban on betting products. [...] But anti-gambling advocates including the Salvation Army, Suicide Prevention Australia and Anglicare have urged Rowland and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to accept the report's recommendations.

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Outdoor dancers head to a beachside park to boost physical health, mood and social connection

ABC Online, Other, 23/12/2023, Nikki Sorbello

YouTube Outdoor social dancing good for health At a small Queensland beach a handful of people with a common passion kick off their shoes, feel the grass underfoot and take pleasure in the wide open space surrounding them. As the group of beachside dancers launch into the salsa or bachata, they're not bothered by the people who've gathered to watch.

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A 'deafening' voice in her head drove Mia Morrissey into an eating disorder. The Butterfly Foundation says there are many others

7news.com.au, Other, 23/12/2023, Ailish Delaney

An "all-consuming" internal monologue that isolated her teenage self from those around her, reminding her she was not good enough. The actress's complex relationship with food began when she was 10 years old, but it was at age 15 when her life was feeling out of control that she turned to behaviours that led her to becoming dangerously underweight.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Battlers flood shelter as tough times take toll

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 24/12/2023, Lauren Novak, Page 11

More people than ever have sought food and support from one of the city's well-known homeless shelters in the lead-up to Christmas this year. A record 178 people passed through the doors of the Hutt St Centre last Monday, and it is expecting its largest crowd, of about 200 people, for Christmas Day lunch.

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Pay rise for Royal Flying Doctor Service nurses still up in the air

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 23/12/2023, Tony Moore

Nurses working for the famous Royal Flying Doctor Service will not receive the Christmas Eve pay increase they bargained for after nine months of wrangling stalled in the federal Fair Work Commission on Friday. The complex wages issue for the famous emergency health charity, founded by Reverend John Flynn in May 1928, now seems set for lengthy arbitration hearings in 2024.

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Davey Street Medical Centre announces February 2024 closure due to loss of doctors

Adelaide Now, Other, 23/12/2023, Alex Treacy

Yet another Tasmanian GP clinic is set to close, with the inability to replace departing doctors cited by management as the key reason. Patients of Davey Street Medical Centre in Hobart were informed by text message earlier this week that the centre would close on February 29 next year.

Also reported by: [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#).

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

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SPORT

Melbourne A-League derby looking to erase memories of pitch invasion violence 12 months after football's darkest day in Australia

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 23/12/2023, Marco Monteverde

Paul Izzo was at the opposite end of the field, but the disturbing sight of the pitch invasion at last December's Melbourne derby remains vivid in the memory of the Victory goalkeeper. A little more than a year after the darkest night in the history of Australian football, Victory and City meet in another derby at the same venue - AAMI Park - on Saturday night.

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

Rivers, lakes lifesavers trial shelved in funds shortfall

Sunday Age, General News, 24/12/2023, Benjamin Preiss, Page 6

A trial that posted lifeguards at several dangerous inland swimming spots will not be extended due to a funding shortage, even though such waterways have been identified as high-risk and account for a third of the state's drowning deaths. Life Saving Victoria (LSV) data shows 59 people drowned across the state in 2022-23, a 33 per cent increase on the 10-year average.

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

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Stop the lip service, and cough up some cash

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 23/12/2023, Mick Carroll

To our readers, the issue of funding for aggressive brain tumours is cut and dried – the federal government needs to spend more money on research and clinical trials. There is no ambiguity. Since launching our Maddy's Wish campaign for funding two weeks ago we have been inundated with letters and notes from readers who cannot understand why the government is holding out.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

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OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

150 in ED 'exposed to TB'

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 24/12/2023, Lauren Novak, Page 1

A patient who waited in the Lyell McEwin Hospital emergency department and later tested positive for tuberculosis may have exposed up to 150 people, it can be revealed. SA Health has confirmed it is screening adults and children who attended the emergency department, and hospital staff, but so far no one else has tested positive. Chief Public Health Officer Professor Nicola Spurrier said authorities expected to continue testing for up to eight weeks.

Also reported by: [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#).

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Festival drug deaths all preventable

Canberra Times, Other, 23/12/2023

All of the 64 drug-related deaths at music festivals across Australia since the year 2000 were preventable. That's the equivalent of a busload of young people, three-quarters of them male, are dead because of outdated approaches to managing illicit drug use that fail to recognise it is a health issue, not a law and order one.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Vibrating pill will make you feel full

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 24/12/2023, Page 13

Next-generation weight-loss pills will contain no drugs but will vibrate in your stomach to trigger a feeling of fullness, scientists believe. The pills work by stimulating the stomach's "stretch" receptors, making the body believe it is full, according to researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard Medical School.

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US seizes thousands of units of counterfeit Ozempic

Australian Financial Review, Other, 23/12/2023, Dani Blum

The US Food and Drug Administration said that it had seized thousands of units of counterfeit Ozempic, the diabetes drug also widely used for weight loss. Some fraudulent Ozempic products may still be on the market, according to the agency.

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OFFICE FOR DRUG CONTROL

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FOOD STANDARDS

Woolworths issues recall for mince pies over metal contamination fears

The Mercury, Other, 23/12/2023

Woolworths has issued a recall for its popular mince pies over fears the product may contain metal. The notice applies to Woolworths brand Shortcrust Summer Berry Mince Pies 6-pack 360g with a best before date of June 13, 2024. [...] Food Standards Australia are urging customers to return the product, as it may cause illness or injury if consumed.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#).

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