



Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care

TODAY'S NEWS

Tuesday, 9th January 2024

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.

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LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Sydney Morning Herald \(page 1\)](#) reports that Victorian health authorities have detailed a rapid increase in hospitalisations from the JN.1 Covid-19 subvariant, with an average of 377 hospitalisations last week.
- The [Canberra Times \(page 1\)](#) reports that families in the ACT are struggling to access paediatricians to get diagnoses for autism and attention deficit disorder in children under 12, which may inhibit their ability to access support.
- The [Age \(page 1\)](#) reports that the nine MDMA overdoses at the Hardmission Festival have renewed calls from the Victorian Ambulance Union for pill testing and changes to drug policing. Data from the Victorian Police has shown that of 277 people searched at music festivals in 2022-23 through the indication of a sniffer dog, drugs were not found 157 times.
- The [Herald Sun \(page 1\)](#) reports that Victorian Liberal mental health spokeswoman Emma Kealy has criticised the health authorities' decision not to send out an emergency drug alert

during the Hardmission Festival where nine people overdosed on MDMA.

- The [**West Australian \(page 1\)**](#) reports that systemic alcohol abuse has led to the suicide of fifteen people in the Kimberly region of Western Australia, bolstering calls for liquor restrictions in these communities.
- The [**Adelaide Advertiser \(page 10\)**](#) reports that the South Australian Health Department is increasing the number of mental health beds in the state's hospitals to combat the growing pressure in hospital ramping rates, and comes after a South Australian man died during a 10-hour wait for an ambulance.
- The [**ABC \(online\)**](#) reports that a survey from healthcare website Cleanbill has found that only 24 per cent of 6,100 clinics interviewed offered bulk billing services. The Department of Health's own statistics from the September quarter of 2023-24 showed that 73.2 per cent of GP consults offer bulk billed.
- The [**ABC \(online\)**](#) reports that growing discontinuations of opioid medicines have created a shortage of available pain relief medicines, with the Therapeutic Goods Administration labelling it as a "high priority".

MINISTER BUTLER

WA had the highest number of people attending care clinics for treatment of injuries on New Year's Eve

West Australian, Other, 08/01/2024, Kimberley Caines

The highest number of people attending care clinics to be treated for injuries on New Year's Eve was in WA, new Federal Government data shows. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said under the clinic arrangements, people were able to see doctors and nurses during extended hours, seven days a week and all urgent care consultations were bulk-billed.

Also reported by: [Geraldton Guardian \(Online\)](#), [Albany Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Manjimup-Bridgetown Times \(Online\)](#), [Kalgoorlie Miner \(Online\)](#).

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Bulk-billing rates decline across Australia as cost-of-living pressures mount

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024, Grace Burmas and Angela Ho

More Australians are being priced out of regular medical care, as the number of healthcare clinics offering bulk billing services continues to decline. Perth resident Justine Ioppolo made about a dozen visits to her doctor in 2023. [...] In a statement, federal Health Minister Mark Butler said the government's investment of \$3.5 billion to increase bulk billing incentives for doctors applied to three in every five GP consultations.

Similar coverage reported by: [The Guardian \(Online\)](#), [Australian Doctor \(Online\)](#).

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Cancer and chronic pain patients hit by new opioid discontinuations

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024, Alison Branley

There are growing concerns about a significant shortage of opioid pain medicines given to some of the sickest Australians. More than a dozen types of opioid products have been discontinued in the past year and doctors say this massive narrowing of the market is restricting what they can give their vulnerable patients. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler referred the ABC's inquiries to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which said the discontinuations were a "high priority".

[Read More](#)

It's getting harder to find a bulk-billing GP. In this state, the practice is almost non-existent

SBS, Other, 08/01/2024, Aleisha Orr

Nearly 7,000 gp clinics across Australia were contacted to determine how many offered bulk billing for

new patients. Here's what we know. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said the \$3.5 billion incentive package would apply to three in every five GP consultations.

[Read More](#)

No fears over antiviral supply

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 08/01/2024, Chris Brooker

Health Minister says he is "not aware" of issues with supply of antivirals, despite surging case numbers, while deferring to expert advice on calls for widened PBS eligibility Speaking at a media event in Adelaide on 4 January, Minister Butler was asked about the current, holiday season spike in Covid incidence and its potential impacts.

[Read More](#)

"Health crisis" with opioid shortages

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 08/01/2024

Today, Palliative Care Australia chief executive Camilla Rowland said a "health crisis" was looming, and sick children, the dying and those with chronic pain would be hurt the most, as the number of opioid pain meds in shortage grows. [...] Health groups have called on Federal Health Minister Mark Butler to force pharma companies to extend notice of discontinuations from six to 12 months, consult with clinicians, review processes so alternatives can get PBS listing quickly and proactively look for alternative products.

Similar coverage reported by: [Royal Australian College of General Practitioners \(Online\)](#).

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2GB, Mornings, 08/01/2024, Ray Hadley

A new report states less than 25% of Australian GPs are offering bulk billing to their adult patients. The research also found those patients who are not bulk-billed have been hit with higher out-of-pocket expenses. Cleanbill Founder James Gillespie said the research had been conducted after the Federal Government introduced new bulk billing incentives for Australian general practice in November last year. Health Minister Mark Butler said after a decade of cuts and neglect by the former government, it had never been harder to see a bulk billing GP.

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ABC Radio Sydney, The World Today, 08/01/2024, Nick Grimm

Report on Australians struggling to access bulk-billing GPs. New data suggests that across the nation, the number of clinics bulk-billing all of their patients is less than one in four, and if people's appointment isn't bulk-billed, it's likely that their out-of-pocket costs will sting. Health Minister Mark Butler said it had never been harder to see a bulk billing GP blaming the previous government. Butler also pointed out there are now 58 Medicare urgent care clinics operating nationwide, offering walk-in health care that is fully bulk-billed.

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Radio National, AM, 08/01/2024, Sabra Lane

Report on more GPs dropping bulk billing services. Bulk billing rates at GP clinics are continuing to slide, with new data revealing less than one in four are bulk billing all of their patients. Patients who are bulk billed don't pay anything for their appointment, with GPs billing the government directly through Medicare instead. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says a \$3.5b bulk-billing incentive for vulnerable patients started in November to help more than 11 million Australians access GP care, particularly in regional and remote areas.

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Shocking treatment of Aussie kids is exposed by report on abuse in sport - as chiefs admit huge fail when it comes to female athletes

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 08/01/2024, Josh Alston

Almost a third of all sport complaints not related to doping that have been taken to the highest level in Australia involve children, with an alarming number involving junior girls.[...] In response to these alarming trends, Federal Sport Minister Anika Wells announced a \$36.3 million initiative on Monday, aimed at reinforcing efforts to combat abuse, bullying, discrimination, and sexual misconduct in sports.

[Read More](#)

5AA, 07:00 News, 08/01/2024

New data reveals almost half of all misconduct and abuse complaints in Australian sports relate to children. The report by Sport Integrity Australia puts better coaching, education and tackling online abuse as its top priorities. Sports Minister Anika Wells will today announce funding to boost efforts to tackle abuse, bullying and sexual misconduct.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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DEPARTMENT

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CORONAVIRUS

New COVID strain bites

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 09/01/2024, Aisha Dow, Page 1

A fresh Omicron sub-variant is triggering a "wave on wave" of COVID-19 as experts warn it is on the rise in NSW. The World Health Organisation has classified subvariant JN.1 as a "variant of interest" because of its "rapidly increasing spread" globally.

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

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Victoria facing first wave of Covid-19 in 2024 as new subvariant takes

over

NEWS.com.au, Other, 08/01/2024, Fergus Ellis

Victoria is in the midst of yet another Covid-19 wave, as increases in community transmission are leading to a swift rise in hospitalisations. New subvariant JN. 1 has taken over as the most prevalent strain of Covid-19 for the state, mirroring impacts being felt internationally.

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

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Hunter aged care fails: 'homes not up to standard'

Newcastle Herald, Other, 08/01/2024, Gabriel Fowler

Poor wound management, pain management, and unplanned weight loss are some of the failures listed for Hunter nursing homes. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has found five homes in the region do not meet standards.

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POPULATION HEALTH

Weather affects babies

West Australian, General News, 09/01/2024, Page 10

Researchers at Curtin University school of population health claim global warming could pose a risk to Australians' reproductive health. They studied 385,000 pregnancies in WA between 2000-15, from 12 weeks before conception until birth.

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Mission to stop premature births

Newcastle Herald, General News, 09/01/2024, Damon Cronshaw, Page 7

A newcastle professor has been awarded a \$3 million grant to develop drugs aimed at preventing premature births and associated health risks. About 9 per cent of pregnancies result in premature births, a statistic reflected in the Hunter. Laureate Professor Roger Smith, of University of Newcastle, said "30 per cent of newborn baby deaths are related to prematurity".

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

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Vape makers' awful tactics

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 09/01/2024, Toby Crockford, Page 7

E-cigarette companies using social media influencers to preach to Queensland kids and circumvent advertising laws will be the target of new federally funded vaping research. Another weapon joining the war on vaping will be Life Ed ambassador Healthy Harold, who will roll out a fresh education program for Queensland primary school students this year.

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Wrangler's tips to avoid snakes during summer season

The Courier Mail, Other, 08/01/2024, Carla Mascarenhas

With the weather warming up Aussies should be extra vigilant about snakes, but one expert has issued some tips. A man in the US has been arrested and charged after he stripped off and jumped into a store's giant fish tank, the Matildas have been dealt a major blow just 6 months out from the Olympics,

eight people are in a critical condition ... [...] More than 500 people were hospitalised with venomous snake bites in 2021-22, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Also reported by: [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#).

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Size matters in new worker tests for dust lung diseases

Canberra Times, Other, 09/01/2024, Duncan Murray

Serious concerns remain for the health of workers' lungs across a range of industries despite a ban on engineered stone coming into effect this year. Testing only accounts for the weight of particles, when size and shape may be equally important in determining safety, experts flagged on Tuesday.

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

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Broome and Derby alcohol restrictions: New booze purchase limits proposed by the Director of Liquor Licensing

West Australian, Other, 08/01/2024, Josh Zimmerman

Takeaway alcohol sales in Broome and Derby would be permitted only between noon and 7pm and a raft of new purchase limits applied under a crackdown on grog proposed by the Director of Liquor Licensing. A total ban on the sale of take-home booze would also apply on Sundays and Mondays in Derby, mirroring conditions applied in Carnarvon last May.

Also reported by: [Kalgoorlie Miner \(Online\)](#).

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Climate change could be impacting babies' birth weights

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 08/01/2024

Climate change could be impacting babies' birth weight after scientists found a potential link to extreme weather exposure during pregnancy. Researchers at the Curtin School of Population Health say global warming could pose a big risk to Australians' reproductive health.

Also reported by: [Daily Liberal \(Online\)](#), [Ballarat Courier \(Online\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#), [The Senior \(Online\)](#), [The Border Mail \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Joyces rejoice as the spirit of giving shines

Shepparton News, General News, 09/01/2024, Kady Hadjab, Page 2

Amid a relentless storm that swept through Shepparton on Christmas Eve, the Joyce family's commitment to spreading joy and supporting The Kids' Cancer Project remained unyielding. The festive display at 2 Wanderers Lane, Kialla, faced unexpected challenges this year.

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PRIMARY CARE

New bed block health shock

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 09/01/2024, Tara Miko and Brad Crouch, Page 10

The lack of mental health beds across the state's embattled hospital and health system is contributing to ambulance ramping rate blow-outs and slower response times. SA Health boss Dr Robyn Lawrence

has ordered measures to free up staff as ramping takes its toll and to deal with the blowout in elective surgery queues, which now tops 20,000 cases and more than 4000 listed as overdue.

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

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Waitlists for autism and ADHD help shut down as crisis grows

Canberra Times, General News, 09/01/2024, Lanie Tindale, Page 1

Canberra families and adults are struggling to get diagnosed with autism and attention deficit disorder (ADHD) with the demand for assessments outstripping availability. There is a long waitlist for the ACT public system appointments, which will only assess children for autism, up to the age of 12.

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Union threat to escalate industrial action

Launceston Examiner, General News, 09/01/2024, Benjamin Seeder, Page 9

Health union leaders are considering strike action at a Tasmanian mental health facility after management there rejected pay demands and then took legal action prohibiting employees from low-level protests over pay. State secretary of the Health and Community Services Union Robbie Moore said the offer of a 3.5 per cent pay increase made by managers of the Hobart Clinic would leave nurses still paid below the level of their public sector comrades.

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Health costs climb as number of bulk-billing GPs slides

Newcastle Herald, General News, 09/01/2024, Andrew Brown, Page 7

A fall in the number of GPs bulk billing highlights the need for the government to make health care more affordable, doctors say. A report released by healthcare monitors Cleanbill revealed the national average for out-of-pocket costs to see a GP is now \$41.69, up by more than three per cent on 2023.

Also reported by: [Kalgoorlie Miner \(Kalgoorlie\)](#).

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'Trying times for parents' as waitlists for paediatricians blow out

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 08/01/2024, Aisha Dow

Desperate parents are booking doctor appointments for their children interstate due to lengthy paediatrician waitlists, which have prompted some specialists to close their books to new patients or advertise delays of more than a year for consultations. [...] Dr Magdalena Simonis, an experienced GP and member of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' quality care expert committee, said other parents were so desperate to get specialist help for their children that they were attending emergency departments hoping to get support sooner.

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SA Health boss acts amid tensions between ambos and ED staff

Adelaide Now, Other, 08/01/2024, Brad Crouch

The head of SA's public hospital system says she's ordered new measures to free up the system, as tensions simmer between stressed paramedics and ED staff. SA Health boss Dr Robyn Lawrence has ordered measures to free up staff as ramping takes its toll and to deal with the blow out in elective surgery queues, which now tops 20,000 cases and more than 4000 listed as overdue.

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

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Adelaide man dies at Lyell McEwin Hospital after nine hours in waiting room

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024, Josephine Lim

Tony Eccleston went to an Adelaide hospital for a suspected blood clot and after nine hours in the waiting room, he died. His widow Elizabeth Eccleston is speaking out following the death of Hectorville

man Eddie, who waited 10 hours for an ambulance last month

Similar coverage reported by: [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#), [In Daily \(Online\)](#).

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Just 10 per cent of GP clinics in WA now bulk billing, as Perth cost-of-living pressures mount

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024, Grace Burmas

More West Australians are being priced out of regular medical care, as the number of healthcare clinics offering bulk billing services continues to decline. Perth resident Justine Ioppolo made about a dozen visits to her doctor in 2023. [...] AMA WA Council of General Practice chair Simon Torvaldsen said the incentives were not enough to significantly raise bulk billing rates.

Similar coverage reported by: [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#), [7news.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#), [9News \(Online\)](#), [Royal Australian College of General Practitioners \(Online\)](#).

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ABC News, News Breakfast, 08/01/2024, Michael Rowland and Emma Rebellato

More than 20,000 people are waiting for elective surgeries in SA and more than 4000 of them are overdue. Ambulance ramping and the backlog within the hospital system have been an issue in SA particularly in hospitals around Adelaide for quite some time. The government has said that the wait list for elective surgery does grow after Christmas each year.

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Channel 7, Sunrise, 08/01/2024, Monique Wright and Mark Beretta

Elective surgery waits have blown out in Adelaide as hospitals struggle to deal with record ramping. It's been revealed the queue for non-urgent overnight procedures has topped 20,000, with more than 4000 listed as overdue. It comes as ramping hit record levels in November, with emergency department doctors and ambulance staff now clashing over which patients should get priority.

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Channel 9, Today, 08/01/2024, Jayne Azzopardi and Clint Stanaway

Doctors, nurses and health professionals are reporting an average of 40 aggressive abuse incidents a day across Qld hospitals. Union officials say the violence is a symptom of a system under pressure after COVID-19, with more and more patients and not enough staff. Cairns recorded the highest rate of workplace violence, followed by the Metro South region.

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SBS, World News Australia, 08/01/2024, Ricardo Goncalves

Access to bulk billing GP clinics across Australia is continuing to decline. A new report shows that last year, hundreds of clinics switched from bulk billing practices to private billing.

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Sky News Live, Afternoon Agenda, 08/01/2024, Danica De Giorgio

New data shows less than 1 in 4 Australian GPs are offering bulk billing to adult patients. The state with the lowest rate was Tas, at 0.9%, while NSW offered the highest rate at 37%. The low bulk-billing rates have also raised concerns, as patients who do not receive it are also facing higher out-of-pocket costs at up to \$51 per consult.

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2GB, Mornings, 08/01/2024, Ray Hadley

Interview with Dr Nicole Higgins, President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, regarding less than 1 in 4 Australian GPs offering bulk billing to adult patients. Higgins says the bulk

billing rate is still over 75% and 90%, especially in some areas around Sydney. She adds what it is reflecting is that for a long time, GPs have been subsidising care and like everyone, they are facing cost of living pressures too.

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3AW, Breakfast, 08/01/2024, Ross Stevenson and Russel Howcroft

Interview with Dr Nicole Higgins, President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, regarding desperate parents who are booking doctor's appointments for their children interstate because of lengthy delays. There's also less than a quarter of Victorian GPs are offering bulk billing. Higgins says people need to realise that the bulk billing rate of over 75% is still quite high and GPs are still subsidising a lot of care. She adds there's been also a shortage of paediatricians throughout the public system.

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5AA, Breakfast, 08/01/2024, Will Goodings and David Penberthy

Interview with Peter Malinauskas, SA Premier, regarding ambulance ramping in the state. Malinauskas says they have a lot of work to do but they have a very clear plan which includes the rollout of additional new beds and the employment of more clinicians to work around those new beds. He adds, however, that the building of the beds takes time.

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Radio National, Breakfast, 08/01/2024, Patricia Karvelas / Hamish Macdonald

Interview with Dr Nicole Higgins, President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, on the RACGP calling on the government to include community-based GPs in disaster preparedness training as part of the government's National Emergencies Review. Higgins says they are making sure that we've got GPs at the table when we're talking about planning for recovery, during recovery and in that time afterwards, because GPs are there with their patients all the way through.

Interview continues on: [Radio National \(Canberra\)](#).

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Video to beat disorder

Hobart Mercury, General News, 09/01/2024, Page 9

Young Australians with an eating disorder would receive video-based treatments under a \$2.9m grant. More than one million Australians are estimated to experience an eating disorder each year, but fewer than one in four get support.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#).

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The liquor files: Part II 'Nan, I'm going to do it'

West Australian, General News, 09/01/2024, Sarah Crawford, Page 1

The insidious impact of alcohol abuse on the North West region is likely a reason 15 young people decided to take their own lives in just four short years, top secret police files obtained by The West Australian reveal. The explosive dossier, compiled by police in 2020 in a bid to strengthen liquor restrictions across the Kimberley, tells heartbreaking stories of the 15 young people and how they spent their tragic final moments.

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Help us to save lives

West Australian, General News, 09/01/2024, Emma Garlett, Page 13

Fifteen young people one just 14 years old dead by their own hands in WA's North West in just four years. Most died following fights with family, romantic break-ups and in one case, bullying. These young people, whose lives and tragic, premature deaths are revealed in today's The West Australian, had another thing in common. Alcohol was determined to have played a key role in their suicides.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

No relevant coverage

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Up to 20 aged care jobs saved

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 09/01/2024, Ben Silvester Region, Page 7

Moyne Shire Council has backed its ability to deliver a high-quality - and profitable aged care service, saving the jobs of up to 20 staff. Councillors voted at their December meeting to retain the home and community care program that assists about 400 people across Moyne Shire to live independently despite having specific needs. The move had the clear backing of those 400 people but it comes amid huge transition in aged care as the federal government reforms the sector.

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Katy Gallagher advances mission to close national gender pay gap

The Mandarin, Other, 08/01/2024, Melissa Coade

Senator Katy Gallagher has described laws compelling the publication of gender pay gap data for employers of 100 staff or more as a real catalyst for change. The minister for finance, women and public service said pay transparency laws , which were passed early last year and come into effect next month, would spur companies to change and equip employees with information to help them decide who to work for.

[Read More](#)

Clinic staff union condemns aggressive legal tactics in wage dispute

The Mercury, Other, 08/01/2024, David Killick

Industrial action including wearing badges and union clothing by nurses seeking a pay rise represented "a serious risk to our patients", the Hobart Clinic says. Industrial action including wearing badges and union clothing by nurses seeking a pay rise represented "a serious risk to our patients", the Hobart Clinic says.

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

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

No relevant coverage

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

BENEFITS INTEGRITY

Doctor in dock over steroids

Courier Mail, General News, 09/01/2024, Vanda Carson, Page 17

A former Gold Coast stem cell doctor and GP is being investigated by the healthcare watchdog for allegedly inappropriate prescription of drugs, including steroids and "image-enhancing drugs" to "numerous patients and himself" over several years, a tribunal has heard. But the Medical Board of Australia, which is trying to take disciplinary action against Michael Belich, is having trouble finding the former Broadbeach resident to serve him with legal papers.

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

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Licence pulled

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 08/01/2024

Pharmacist and luxury car lover Ben Huynh's pharmacy licence has been suspended as he faces allegations of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme fraud, The Australian reported last week. It is the latest blow to Huynh, whose glamorous lifestyle was revealed in Nov after police seized a rumoured three Ferraris and one BMW from his mansion in Sydney's Dural.

[Read More](#)

Doctor charged with rape can keep treating women via telehealth at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

The Courier Mail, Other, 08/01/2024, Vanda Carson court reporter

A doctor at one of the state's top metropolitan hospitals has been charged with rape, but can continue treating women patients as long as he consults via telehealth, the watchdog has announced. Sayonne Sivalingam is accused of raping the person in June last year and is due back in Brisbane Magistrates Court on January 22.

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

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HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

CLP slam NT government's approach to alcohol treatment program

Northern Territory News, Other, 08/01/2024, Bethany Griffiths

More than 3000 Territorians undertook alcohol and drug treatment assessments last year. Read why the opposition say the government have dropped the ball on reducing alcohol-related harm. The Country Liberal Party has committed to an analysis of the Territory's drug and alcohol treatment programs, and doubled down on their promise for compulsory rehabilitation if elected.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#).

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Cricket cap fits for park players

Daily Telegraph, General News, 09/01/2024, Jason Hosken, Page 3

Suburban cricketers are ignoring strong recommendations from Cricket Australia and Cricket NSW to make helmets compulsory when batters are facing fast bowling. Nearly 10 years since the death of Test batsman Phillip Hughes after he was struck by a bouncer at the SCG, many local cricketers are still allowed to face fast bowling wearing only a cap.

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Crisafulli's power move: ditch unwanted Games

Courier Mail, General News, 09/01/2024, Mike O'Connor, Page 21

Over coffee last week, a mate of mine revealed that he had come up with a strategy which he said would guarantee that David Crisafulli was the next premier of Queensland. "It's the Olympic Games," he said. "He's got to announce that if he's elected, he'll ditch them. The truth is that nobody wants them and they'll bankrupt the state. Crisafulli just has to have the guts to stand up and say what everyone's thinking."

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

Analysis Sport How Sam Kerr's ACL injury puts the human back into her superhuman career

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024, Samantha Lewis

There she was: tearing off towards the frenzied crowd of Stadium Australia, a single fist in the air, the back of England's net still rippling as goalkeeper Mary Earps looked up into the sky and cursed. Sam Kerr had just scored one of the best and most important goals of her career: a long-range strike to bring the Matildas level with the European Champions in the Women's World Cup semifinal.

Similar coverage reported by: 7news.com.au (Online).

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

Research funding has been politicised and universities are losing public trust — is this the year that will reverse those trends?

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024

ATARs are out and my kid, like many thousands of others across the nation, is wondering if he's done enough to get into the tertiary course of his choice. Like so many others, his educational and social life was significantly affected by COVID-19, so this is a real concern. He and his peer group are also wondering how they'll pay for their studies and are acutely aware of what the Jobs Ready Graduate package means for them.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Labor remote home ownership plan just one part of solution

The Australian, General News, 09/01/2024, Anthony Dillon, Page 9

A good analogy that describes why the wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians is not improving as fast as we would like is that of a boat with several holes. Unless all the holes are patched up within a short time, the boat will sink. If the boat has 10 holes and four holes are expertly patched up, water will still continue to enter through the remaining six holes and the boat will eventually sink.

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NT government still won't investigate health concerns of mine implicated in Natasha Fyles's resignation

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024, Jane Bardon

The reshuffled Northern Territory government has refused to investigate health concerns about the remote manganese mine at the centre of former chief minister Natasha Fyles's resignation last month. On remote Groote Eylandt off Arnhem Land, Indigenous communities have long lived alongside manganese dust from South32's massive Gemco mine.

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OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

No drugs found in most searches

Age, General News, 09/01/2024, Rachel Eddie, Page 1

Victoria Police do not find drugs on more than half the people they search at music festivals, neverbefore-seen data released to state parliament has revealed as crossbench MPs demand transparency on the effectiveness of sniffer dogs. Nine people at the Hardmission Festival in Flemington were hospitalised in critical conditions over the weekend with suspected MDMA overdoses, prompting renewed debate on the state's policing of drugs.

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Bitter pill

Herald Sun, General News, 09/01/2024, Brooke Grebert-Craig, Shannon Deery and Gianni Francis, Page 1

Rave organisers and health officials have been slammed for not warning patrons of a spate of ecstasy overdoses at a hardcore dance event, while last night three people still fought for life. Serious questions have been raised about the handling of the emergency and lack of transparency over what unfolded at the festival attended by more than 10,000 partygoers.

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

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In the dark on OD emergency

Herald Sun, Editorials, 09/01/2024, Page 18

Rave goers and the wider community faced an information vacuum regarding a life-threatening spate of drug overdoses on the weekend. For several hours after young people began collapsing at the Hardmission Festival on Saturday evening, with nine rushed to hospital and up to eight people including a teenage girl placed in induced comas, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria failed to release clear details about the crisis or had no systems in place to properly update the community.

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New push for pill testing at festivals

Courier Mail, General News, 09/01/2024, Page 17

A state government is facing renewed pressure to allow pill testing at music festivals following a mass overdose at a rave on Saturday night. The Greens, Animal Justice Party and Legalise Cannabis Party are calling on the Victorian Government to pass their bill to implement pill testing after eight people were left critical, seven of them in induced comas, after reportedly overdosing on MDMA at the Hardmission Festival at Flemington Racecourse.

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Nine in hospital after suspected festival overdoses, eight critical

Canberra Times, General News, 09/01/2024, Page 9

Nine people have been taken to hospital after suffering suspected drug overdoses at a music festival at

Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne. Eight of the nine were in a critical condition and had been put on breathing tubes after falling unwell on Saturday, Ambulance Victoria director Vanessa Gorman told reporters on Monday.

Also reported by: [Daily Liberal \(Dubbo\)](#), [Western Advocate \(Bathurst\)](#), [Central Western Daily \(Orange\)](#), [Daily Advertiser \(Wagga Wagga\)](#), [Ballarat Courier \(Ballarat\)](#), [Warrnambool Standard \(Warrnambool\)](#).

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Call to pass pill test Bill

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 09/01/2024, Page 5

Three crossbench parties are putting pressure on Victoria's Labor government to allow pill testing to take place at music festivals after a mass overdose at a rave in Melbourne over the weekend. Eight partygoers were left critical, seven of whom were put in induced comas, after reportedly overdosing on MDMA while at the Hardmission Festival at Flemington Racecourse on Saturday night.

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Seven people in induced comas after suspected MDMA overdoses at Melbourne music festival

The Guardian, Other, 08/01/2024, Adeshola Ore

Seven young people have been placed in medically induced comas after suspected MDMA overdoses at a Melbourne music festival over the weekend, prompting calls for pill testing to be legalised in the state. Paramedics at the Hardmission electronic music festival, held at Flemington racecourse on Saturday, transported nine festivalgoers to various hospitals across Melbourne.

Similar coverage reported by: [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Border Mail \(Online\)](#).

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ABC News, News Breakfast, 08/01/2024, Michael Rowland and Emma Rebellato

People are in a critical condition in hospital after attending a rave in Melbourne on Saturday. The Ambulance Union claims the patients suffered suspected drug overdoses at the Hard Mission Festival held at Flemington Racecourse. The hospitalisation of festival goers has prompted fresh calls for pill testing to be legalised in Victoria.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Cancer and chronic pain patients hit by new opioid discontinuations

ABC Online, Other, 08/01/2024, Alison Branley

There are growing concerns about a significant shortage of opioid pain medicines given to some of the sickest Australians. More than a dozen types of opioid products have been discontinued in the past year and doctors say this massive narrowing of the market is restricting what they can give their vulnerable patients. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler referred the ABC's inquiries to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which said the discontinuations were a "high priority".

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Tapentadol scripts rise by 40% amid overall decline in opioid prescribing

Australian Doctor, Other, 08/01/2024, Rachel Fieldhouse

There has been a shift towards prescribing tapentadol over other opioids, says Dr Hester Wilson. Tapentadol is the only PBS-listed opioid to see a significant growth in prescriptions over recent years, amid an overall decline for all other subsidised opioid analgesics, new data show. [...] They included the TGA's decision to restrict the indications for their use to manage chronic non-cancer pain except in exceptional circumstances as well as the introduction of smaller pack sizes.

OFFICE FOR DRUG CONTROL

Volunteers with depression needed to trial new ketamine tablet

The Senior, Other, 08/01/2024

Ketamine has shown potential as a treatment for depression, but often causes unpleasant side effects. A research team believes they may have solved the problem. The team, led by the Central Adelaide Local Health Network and University of Adelaide, has developed a new tablet that releases the drug gradually into the body.

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