



Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care

TODAY'S NEWS

Wednesday, 4th December 2024

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LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Australian Financial Review](#) (Page 1) reports that in a submission to the federal government, the industry organisation representing most private hospitals say that they should be allowed to charge patients up to \$200 extra for every visit or they will have to close as the result of a spike in costs.
- The [Sydney Morning Herald](#) (Page 1) reports that Australians aged 65 and over were asked in a recent survey by the AMP about their thoughts regarding aged care, with more than half surveyed saying that they would prefer to receive aged care at home if necessary.
- [The Australian](#) (Page 3) reports that on Wednesday US pharma company Moderna will open its Melbourne factory and will produce commercial-scale mRNA vaccines. "For Australia to be able to participate in that research ecosystem is really important," said Melbourne University professor of medicine Terry Nolan.
- The [Sydney Morning Herald](#) (Page 3) reports that a new mobile filtration plant will be commissioned by the NSW state government to cleanse tap water following the discovery of per- and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAS) at elevated levels.
- [The Australian](#) (Page 7) reports that the Greens have announced that oral contraception and intrauterine devices would be free for women under a \$250 million election policy. "There are

4.8 million women in Australia using contraceptives and making them free would save women hundreds of dollars a year and empower women to make decisions about bodily autonomy despite a difficult financial climate," Greens Senator Larissa Waters said.

- **The Age** (Page 9) reports that the Royal Melbourne Hospital has reversed its decision to reduce graduate nurses' hours, following backlash and intervention from the Department of Health. However, Alfred Health continues to face scrutiny for a similar policy affecting its 2025 nursing intake amid rising concerns about workforce support.
- **The Age** reports that the Department of Health has overturned its ban on robotic surgery in public hospitals, allowing facilities to self-fund this advanced technology. While this decision expands access, concerns persist about equity, as hospitals face tight budgets, and centralised funding for the costly equipment has not been provided.
- The **West Australian** reports that a survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical trainees and interns by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation has found that more than half experienced or witnessed racism, bullying, or sexual harassment, compared to a third of trainees in total.

MINISTER BUTLER

Vaccine doubt still lingers as plant opens

The Australian, General News, 04/12/2024, Natasha Robinson, Page 3

Commercial scale mRNA vaccines will be produced onshore for the first time in Australia with the opening of US pharma company Moderna's Melbourne factory, as new analysis reveals six in 10 of all parents are feeling distressed since the pandemic over vaccinating their children. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler, who will attend the factory opening, described sovereign supply as "a major step forward in helping protect Australians against future pandemics".

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

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

Independent pricing an opportunity for genuine health reform

Australian Financial Review, General News, 04/12/2024, Martin Bowles, Page 35

Private hospitals need fairer agreements with health funds. Providers, insurers, and government need to start a conversation.

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

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Fraud audit skewers top research agency

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 04/12/2024, Liam Mannix, Page 11

Australia's top research agency has been savaged by government auditors over its lax approach to scientific misconduct and fraud in an audit that lays the groundwork for a major shake-up of the way bad science is policed. [...] The NHMRC only briefed federal Health Minister Mark Butler on the matter two weeks after being notified of the fraud.

Also reported by: [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#), [WA Today \(Online\)](#), [Brisbane Times \(Online\)](#), [The Age \(Online\)](#), [Age \(Melbourne\)](#).

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

Vaccine hub hits home ground

Herald Sun, General News, 04/12/2024, Sarah Booth, Page 4

Australia's first ever mRNA vaccine manufacturing facility is now operational in Melbourne, with locally made Moderna jabs set to be available in time for winter. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said the site was a "major step forward in helping protect Australians against future pandemics".

Also reported by: [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#), [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#).

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Decriminalisation key for the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in their push for drug policy reforms

ABC Online, Other, 03/12/2024, Tom Hartley

Drug decriminalisation, regulated cannabis trials, more pill testing and syringe programs are on the list of health reforms demanded by Australia's largest specialist medical society. [...] 'Won't be going down that path' While a spokesperson for Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said the measures are "matters for state and territory governments", the NSW Minns government has already struck down one of the RACP's key policies.

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Mental health, endometriosis treatment behind a spike in young people taking up private health insurance

ABC Online, Other, 03/12/2024

More young people are taking out private health insurance policies to access mental health services, treatment for endometriosis, and rehabilitation and addiction services, the peak body for the private health insurance sector says. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler told ABC Afternoon Briefing that private health care was "an important part of the mix" of our existing healthcare system.

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ABC News, ABC News Afternoons, 03/12/2024, Ros Childs

Recent figures from the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) show young people under 30 driving a surge in private health demand. Factors behind the demand include policy changes and a growing need for services not adequately covered by Medicare. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler views the trend as a sign the healthcare system is working as intended, with private health insurance offering more options for young people seeking mental health support.

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SEA FM , Breakfast, 03/12/2024, Patty and Danni

Specialised epilepsy services on the North West coast and mental health services for King Island are being cut due to a funding shortfall in the government-funded TAZREACH program. Tasmanian Health Minister Jacquie Petrusma says these cuts are hurting rural communities. She has written to Health Minister Mark Butler and state Labor to address the issue.

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2DU, 2DU Breakfast, 03/12/2024

Interview with Federal Member for Parkes Mark Coulton on local news updates. Coulton calls for funding for the Royal Far West's National Paediatric Telecare service, which helps children in remote communities with developmental issues. He says the organisation is set to lose funding by June 30 unless continued support is secured. He says he has contacted Health Minister Mark Butler's office about the issue.

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ABC Radio Brisbane, 11:00 News, 03/12/2024

According to the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority, 35,000 people aged 25-29 have turbocharged growth in the private health insurance sector in the past year. Private Healthcare Australia notes mental health support and treatment for endometriosis and drug and alcohol addiction as the reasons for the increase. CEO Dr Rachel David notes the increase is unusual amid the cost of living crisis. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler stresses the importance of the private health sector.

Also reported by: [ABC Radio Darwin \(Darwin\)](#), [ABC Radio Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [ABC Radio Hobart \(Hobart\)](#).

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\$37m funding boost for aged care meals services

Inside Ageing, Other, 03/12/2024, Amy Clarke

The Australian Government has announced a \$37 million investment aimed at improving food and meal services for older Australians receiving aged care. [...] In a statement, Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells emphasised the importance of addressing malnutrition risks highlighted by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which reported that nearly 68% of aged care residents were malnourished or at risk.

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ABC Radio Brisbane, Mornings, 03/12/2024, Steve Austin

Interview with Bec Dakin, program manager, Ipswich Meals on Wheels, on the federal government's announcement of a 10% funding increase starting in January 2024. Dakin welcomes the positive impact of the funding boost from Minister Anika Wells but argues that it does not address the core issue of demand. She explains it covers rising costs but not financial shortfalls.

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ABC Radio Brisbane, Mornings, 03/12/2024, Steve Austin

Austin recalls his previous interview with Bec Dakin, program manager, Ipswich Meals on Wheels, on financial challenges faced by the service due to increased demand. He reads a statement from a spokesperson for Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells, who states the government is giving an immediate cost-of-living funding boost to CHSP meal providers serving communities across Australia. There will be a funding increase of around 10% starting in January 2024.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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DEPARTMENT

Woorayl Lodge delegation heads to Canberra

South Gippsland Sentinel Times, General News, 03/12/2024, Page 20

Leongatha's Woorayl Lodge recently sent a delegation to Canberra, Co-CEO Corporate Services Andrew Ross saying productive meetings were held raising awareness of the need to increase aged care bed capacity in South Gippsland. [...] Meetings were held with Lilli Balaam, an advisor to the Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care Anne Ruston, and with Michael Lye who is Deputy Secretary for Ageing and Aged Care at the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Memorial garden opens at Rainbow

Weekly Advertiser, General News, 04/12/2024, Page 51

A new memorial garden in a three-level outdoor space in the grounds of Bowhaven Hostel and Rainbow Hospital honours the memory of Leonie Clarke, a long-term board member. [...] The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and Department of Health's Aged Care Branch Public Sector Residential Aged Care Services and Community Kitchen Garden Initiative Grants 2020-21 supported the project.

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Tool coming to ensure safe use of AI in aged care

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 03/12/2024, Jodie Wolf

A new online tool to help classify different types of artificial intelligence solutions used in Australian health and aged care has been announced by the Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre. The Department of Health and Aged Care and two specialist AI teams within the University of Technology Sydney UTS Rapido and UTS Human Technology Institute are also involved in the initiative to develop and road test the localisation of an international framework to support the safe adoption of AI.

[Read More](#)

Commission remains focused on care minute non-compliance

Helloleaders.com.au, Other, 03/12/2024, Alex Jacobs

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner Janet Anderson PSM has welcomed the Aged Care Bill's passage in her latest Commissioner's message, while also warning providers about potential health risks over summer and the risk of ongoing care minute non-compliance. [...] Additional information is available on the Department of Health and Aged Care's website.

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Safe AI use in healthcare

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 03/12/2024

A new initiative to create an online tool that will help classify different types of artificial intelligence (AI) solutions used in Australian healthcare has been announced by the Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre. Teaming up with the Department of Health and Aged Care and two specialist AI teams from the University of Technology Sydney, the initiative complements efforts by governments, peak organisations and clinical professional and safety bodies to ensure AI is deployed safely into health care settings.

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The Water Cooler: Comings and goings in the APS

PS News, Other, 03/12/2024, James Day

The Australian Government Solicitor's Office has appointed Meredith Allen as its national manager of general counsel. [...] Members will include consumer advocates, aged-care providers, ICT specialists, primary and clinical care experts, and representatives from the Department of Health and Aged Care and Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

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ABC Tropical North, Breakfast, 03/12/2024, Meecham Philpott

Interview with Karen McCormick, North Queensland Primary Health Network, on new mental health programs targeting depression and suicide. McCormick says their new grassroots programs, including the Real Mates Talk initiative, have helped the local community. She notes research from the federal Health Department shows suicidal ideation is more commonly linked to mental distress than mental illness. She says community connection and support are key to addressing the underlying issues of mental distress.

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6PR, Breakfast, 03/12/2024, Steve Mills and Karl Langdon

Regular Segment: Rumour File. Mills reports elderly people who have a family history of bowel cancer and previously had a government-funded colonoscopy every three years will reportedly no longer get the government-funded procedure. The Department of Health and Aged Care has clarified that the current Medicare referral system relies on GPs as gatekeepers to determine the appropriate treatment. In Western Australia, GPs can request a publicly funded colonoscopy based on clinical indicators, with urgent cases prioritised according to risk and family history.

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ABC Radio Brisbane, Mornings, 03/12/2024, Steve Austin

Interview with Joanna Noller, co-owner and general manager of four skin cancer clinics, on ongoing issues with Medicare rebates and bulk billing. Nolan explains a glitch in the system has prevented patients from receiving their full Medicare rebates after paying upfront for treatment. She says there has been poor communication between Medicare, the Department of Health, and her clinic. Austin reports Hank Jongen, Services Australia general manager, says the issue has now been resolved and they are working with the Department of Health and Aged Care to implement changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

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VACCINES

Vaccine doubt still lingers as plant opens

The Australian, General News, 04/12/2024, Natasha Robinson, Page 3

Commercial scale mRNA vaccines will be produced onshore for the first time in Australia with the opening of US pharma company Moderna's Melbourne factory, as new analysis reveals six in 10 of all parents are feeling distressed since the pandemic over vaccinating their children. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler, who will attend the factory opening, described sovereign supply as "a major step forward in helping protect Australians against future pandemics".

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Also reported by: [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#), [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#).

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Pregnant women get jab

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 04/12/2024, Page 4

Pregnant Queenslanders can now be vaccinated against a potentially deadly respiratory virus for free under a \$13.5m state government program. Health Minister Tim Nicholls revealed the state government would pull the trigger early on free vaccinations against respiratory syncytial virus for expectant mothers.

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Whooping cough rise

West Australian, General News, 04/12/2024, Hannah Cross, Page 1

WA has recorded its largest monthly number of whooping cough cases in almost a decade, due to vaccine hesitancy. Medical staff reported 230 cases to the National Communicable Disease Surveillance System for the month the most since November 2015.

Jab plea amid rise in whooping cough cases

Border Watch, General News, 04/12/2024, Page 7

Pregnant women and infants are once again being urged to get vaccinated against whooping cough, with case numbers continuing to increase across the state. Whilst South Australia is not experiencing as severe an increase as some other states and territories, cases of pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, have climbed to 1,349 this year in SA.

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Townsville influenza outbreak: Public Health Unit urge vaccinations, masks

Cairns Post, Other, 03/12/2024, Cameron Bates

Townsville health authorities are warning locals to get vaccinated and wear masks in public to combat a major spike in influenza cases. Townsville health authorities are warning North Queenslanders to get vaccinated, practise good hygiene and wear masks in public to combat a major spike in lab-confirmed influenza cases.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#)

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

How you can manage your anxiety about aged care

Sydney Morning Herald, Money, 04/12/2024, Rachel Lane, Page 1

A recent survey by AMP asked Australians aged 65 and over their thoughts about aged care. It turns out most feel unprepared and had widespread financial concerns.

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\$37m funding boost for aged care meals services

Inside Ageing, Other, 03/12/2024, Amy Clarke

The Australian Government has announced a \$37 million investment aimed at improving food and meal services for older Australians receiving aged care. [...] In a statement, Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells emphasised the importance of addressing malnutrition risks highlighted by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which reported that nearly 68% of aged care residents were malnourished or at risk.

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POPULATION HEALTH

TV star drives way to escape DV

Herald Sun, General News, 04/12/2024, Jack Nivison, Page 4

Demand for a service that provides free rides for domestic violence victims has surged by 63 per cent over the past year. [...] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data indicates that "at the hands of a current or previous cohabiting partner", one in six Australian women will experience physical violence and economic abuse, and one in five will experience sexual violence.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#), [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#)

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Ultra-deadly synthetic opioids are causing overdoses in unsuspecting

users: police

The Australian, Other, 03/12/2024, Bimini Plessner

Ultra-deadly synthetic opioids masquerading as cocaine, heroin, MDMA and even vape liquid are being smuggled into Australia's illicit drug market and causing overdoses in unsuspecting users, police warn. The Australian Federal Police said the "alarming", highly potent and potentially deadly drugs known as nitazenes have been found across Australia

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Four-year-olds caught vaping in WA schools but suspensions down

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 03/12/2024, Connor McGoverne

Twelve months since a vaping crackdown was flagged for West Australian public schools, the number of students caught has more than halved – but children as young as four are still getting their hands on them. Children as young as four years old have been caught smoking e-cigarettes, however, only 789 students were suspended in the first semester of this year – with the second half tracking similarly – compared to 3337 across 2023 and 3630 in 2022.

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

More fibre to avoid cancer

Courier Mail, General News, 04/12/2024, Page 9

Australian researchers are urging people to bump up their fibre intake and improve their eating habits if they want to reduce their risk of deadly digestive cancers. Two Flinders University studies expand on existing evidence that a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, legumes and dairy may protect against the risk of gastrointestinal (GI) cancers including bowel and improve outcomes of these diseases.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#), [West Australian \(Perth\)](#)

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Health Check: Let there be light (therapy). Invion up 160pc on skin cancer trial news

The Australian, Other, 03/12/2024, Tim Boreham

Invion (ASX:IVX) shares have gone on a mighty romp on news that the company has enrolled its first patient in its phase I/II non-melanoma skin cancer trial, using its photo dynamic therapy (PTD) technique. At first blush, the gain of up to 160% might seem an extravagant reaction to what in isolation is modest news. But Invion has been woefully undervalued relative to its peers and it seems that investors have been girding for even a whiff of good news.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#)

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Endometriosis: an ancient disease requiring new approaches

The Australian, Other, 03/12/2024, Magdalena Simonis

Endometriosis is a disease that despite being documented since ancient times, has remained a diagnostic challenge wreaking distress and in some, destruction on the lives of those affected. It affects at least one in nine women and girls over the course of their reproductive life, mostly spanning from menarche (when periods first start), to menopause (when women stop menstruating) and affects some nonbinary people too.

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5-day brain stimulation may prevent future pain

Toowoomba Chronicle, Other, 03/12/2024

Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) Chronic pain is a significant global health challenge,

affecting nearly 20 per cent of the world's population. Researchers from NeuRA and UNSW have discovered a preventative brain stimulation technique that could stop chronic pain before it takes hold, offering new hope for millions who live with this debilitating condition.

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Revolution in breast cancer detection

Shepparton News Online, Other, 03/12/2024

BreastScreen NSW is Australia's first population-based screening program to introduce cutting-edge technology to support radiologists in interpreting a select range of mammography images. The integration of machine reading technology will ensure BreastScreen NSW can continue to deliver a world-class service, while meeting the needs of NSW's growing population.

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Channel 10, 10 News First, 03/12/2024, Jennifer Keyte

An alarming study in The Lancet has found Australia has the highest rates of cancer in the world for people aged between 15 and 39. Experts are at a loss to explain the concerning trend, but diet, lifestyle and genetics are all being examined. Breast, colorectum, testicular, cervical, and thyroid cancer rates have increased.

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Channel 7, Sunrise, 03/12/2024, Natalie Barr & Matt Shirvington

Interview with Maria Said, CEO, Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia, on the new free service Ezema Connect. Said says the program is initially available at Perth Children's Hospital and is set to expand nationwide within the next 12 months to support other allergic conditions. She explains the service offers fast-track access to expert advice and evidence-based resources to help manage eczema while waiting for professional care.

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PRIMARY CARE

Greens' contraception giveaway

The Australian, General News, 04/12/2024, Rhiannon Down, Page 7

Contraception would be free for women under a \$250m-a-year election policy unveiled by the Greens, in a cost-of-living pitch to voters to combat gender inequality. The Greens announced that fully funding oral contraception and intrauterine devices would be a pillar of the minor party's federal election policy platform, by eliminating the contribution women pay under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

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

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Private hospitals want \$200-per-visit fee

Australian Financial Review, General News, 04/12/2024, Michael Smith, Page 1

Private hospitals say they should be allowed to charge patients up to \$200 extra for every visit, warning there is little other choice unless Labor agrees to \$1.3 billion in emergency funding for the next two years.

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Hospital retreats from plan to cut nurses' hours

Age, General News, 04/12/2024, Broede Carmody & Gemma Grant, Page 9

The Royal Melbourne Hospital has backed down from a plan to slash the working hours of early-career nurses from next year, upping the pressure on The Alfred to do the same for its 2025 graduate intake. The Age revealed last week both hospitals had warned separate nursing cohorts to brace for a three-day work week cut from four days.

CLP tables abortion petition

Northern Territory News, General News, 04/12/2024, Fia Walsh, Page 11

The CLP has tabled a petition signed by more than 2000 people calling for abortion rights to be repealed in the Northern Territory. Petition organiser and Baptist Pastor Sharon Crook said backbencher Andrew Mackay took the petition to parliament at the direction of Deputy Chief Minister Gerard Maley.

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Dengue Fever case revealed

Cairns Post, General News, 04/12/2024, Catherine Duffy, Page 7

Health authorities have warned Torres Strait Island residents to be on alert after a new, locally acquired case of dengue fever was identified. Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service public health medical officer Dr Allison Hempenstall said the latest case of dengue fever had been identified on Erub (Darnley) Island.

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Shot in the arm for residents

Cairns Post, General News, 04/12/2024, Arun Singh Mann, Page 8

A growing Far North community is celebrating the return of its medical practice after a three-year closure, but a long-term rural GP is questioning at what cost to the long-term viability of the industry the feel-good result was achieved. Mission Beach's only practice, formerly known as Tristar Medical, closed in December 2021, however last week reopened as a satellite clinic to the Tully Medical Centre, understood to be sharing staff with its parent firm, with an additional two part-time Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine registrars starting in January.

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Bulk-billing show of faith at urgent clinic opening

Newcastle Herald, General News, 04/12/2024, Damon Cronshaw, Page 2

Labor MPs Pat Conroy and Sharon Claydon reaffirmed their commitment to bulk-billing at the opening of an urgent care clinic at Charlestown. Federal funding will enable the Medicare clinic to operate daily from 8am to 8pm, with one doctor on at any given time.

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

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COVID-19 on the rise

Shepparton News, General News, 04/12/2024, Kate Walters, Page 5

The latest wave of the virus to hit Australia seems most advanced in Victoria, with the state seeing a significant rise in virus activity towards the end of November. According to the Department of Health, the latest Victorian COVID-19 surveillance report shows a substantial increase in the number of people in hospital with COVID-19.

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Health service confident over budget

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 04/12/2024, Ben Silvester, Page 3

Victoria's major regional hospitals are still showing financial red flags, with some also failing to provide the healthcare they pledged to provide, ACM can reveal. An analysis of the health services' 2023-24 annual reports, as well as their statements of priority - the contracts they sign with the Victorian government - showed many recorded operating deficits running into the tens of millions of dollars.

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

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Greens announce election push to make birth control free

The Australian, Other, 04/12/2024, Jessica Wang

The Greens have revealed their latest election pitch to make all TGA-approved forms of birth control free for women, including modern versions of the contraceptive pill which have fewer side effects but cost three times the price of subsidised options. Greens spokesperson for women Larissa Waters said cost barriers to modern pills and the copper IUD forced some women to "cut corners and use cheaper options, or go without contraception," especially in a cost-of-living crisis.

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

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Independent hospital pricing an opportunity for genuine health reform

Australian Financial Review, Other, 03/12/2024, Martin Bowles

As models of care and medical technology continue to advance, patient outcomes in Australia remain second to none. Our healthcare structure stands out in its balance of public and private sectors complementing each other to offer patients both accessibili...

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Hospital retreats from plan to slash nurses' hours

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 03/12/2024, Gemma Grant & Broede Carmody

The Royal Melbourne Hospital has backed down from a plan to slash the working hours of early-career nurses from next year, upping the pressure on The Alfred to do the same for its 2025 graduate intake. The Age revealed last week both hospitals had warned separate nursing cohorts to brace for a three-day workweek – cut back from four days.

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Public hospitals get green light on robotic surgery – but there's a catch

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 03/12/2024, Henrietta Cook

Thousands more Victorians will get access to robotic surgery at public hospitals after the state government overturned a long-standing ban to expand access – but health services will have to pay for the expensive technology themselves. In a major shift, the Department of Health says it now supports public health services that want to invest in robotic surgery.

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Galiwin'ku, Elcho Island gets long-awaited Telstra 5G upgrade after history of poor connectivity

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 03/12/2024, Alex Treacy

After Telstra copped recent criticism for not advising local communities properly when switching off base stations for upgrades, the telco appears to have made a better effort for its next outage. [...] First, medical authorities including Australian Medical Association NT president Dr Robert Parker were outraged when Tiwi, taking in the Royal Darwin and Darwin Private hospitals, was plunged into a black spot with little notice, Telstra subsequently admitting it failed to follow proper processes.

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

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Inclusive funding key to improve health and wellbeing for Australians with disability

Toowoomba Chronicle, Other, 03/12/2024

Royal Australian College of GPs Access to more funding for essential GP care is key to improve health and wellbeing for Australians with disability, says the Royal Australian College of GPs (RAC GP). The call comes on International Day of People with Disability, 3 December.

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New technology saving ambulances for emergencies

Shepparton News Online, Other, 03/12/2024

Ambulance Victoria has introduced new video technology to triage non-urgent callers to 000. Video assisted triage was introduced for all patients in April to allow nurses and paramedics to better assess and determine the best medical care for their needs.

'Under significant pressure': regional Victorian hospitals still struggling

The Border Mail, Other, 03/12/2024, Ben Silvester

An analysis of the health services' 2023-24 annual reports, as well as their statements of priority - the contracts they sign with the Victorian government - showed many recorded operating deficits running into the tens of millions of dollars. It showed others were bailed out by the government with even greater sums, while some recorded huge deficits even after equally large bailouts.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Military must protect those who serve in it

Age, Editorials, 04/12/2024, Page 16

From 1985 to 2022, there were 2007 confirmed deaths from suicide among Australian Defence Force members. [...] "A suicide-monitoring report of ADF members, past and present, conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, has found "that the suicide rate for ex-serving males has remained relatively constant for almost 20 years".

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Opposition expected to support Labor's veteran suicide prevention body

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 03/12/2024

The government's proposal to set up a new legal body to oversee suicide prevention for veterans looks set to go through with bipartisan support, according to Sky News Political Editor Andrew Clennell. "That's good news for veterans in the wake of this Royal Commission report," Mr Clennell said.

Also reported by: [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#).

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Mental health, endometriosis treatment behind a spike in young people taking up private health insurance

ABC Online, Other, 03/12/2024

More young people are taking out private health insurance policies to access mental health services, treatment for endometriosis, and rehabilitation and addiction services, the peak body for the private health insurance sector says. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler told ABC Afternoon Briefing that private health care was "an important part of the mix" of our existing healthcare system.

[Read More](#)

Mental health inequity

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 03/12/2024

New research has found that Australians living in the most disadvantaged areas experience the highest levels of mental health distress and have the least access to services. Researchers used mental distress data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics in conjunction with census demographic data to investigate levels of mental health distress across the population.

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ABC News, News Breakfast, 03/12/2024, Michael Rowland & Emma Rebellato

Interview with Minister for Veterans' Affairs Minister Matt Keogh on the government's response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Keogh details efforts to combat sexual violence in the Australian Defence Force, including a formal inquiry and mandatory discharges for convicted

offenders. He notes the need for an independent leader to head a new statutory body overseeing reforms, including suicide prevention.

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4BC, Breakfast , 03/12/2024, Peter Fegan

Researchers have studied the link between eating healthier and reducing depression. The study examined fruit and vegetable intake and depressive symptoms over 11 years in over 3,000 twins from Australia, Denmark, Sweden, and the US. UNSW Sydney lead researcher Dr Annabel Matison says few studies have focused on adults and twins.

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Radio National, AM, 03/12/2024, Sabra Lane

The federal government has committed to a formal inquiry into military sexual violence as part of its response to the Royal Commission into defence and veteran suicide. The Royal Commission uncovered significant sexual assault issues, with Defence reporting close to 800 cases in the last five years, though under-reporting likely means the true numbers are higher. The government has agreed to implement several recommendations, including discharging ADF members convicted of sexual offences.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

2CC, Canberra Live, 03/12/2024, Leon Delaney

Interview with Dr Kerry Aust, President of the Australian Medical Association ACT, on the results of the latest Medical Board of Australia medical training survey. Aust says the results show positive trends in Canberra, including better support services for trainee doctors and increased satisfaction with training preparation. She says challenges remain with bullying, racism, and sexual harassment, with Indigenous trainees facing particularly high rates of discrimination. She notes that despite the ongoing pay dispute between the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation and Canberra Health Services, doctors report a positive training experience.

Interview continues on: [2CC \(Canberra\)](#).

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

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HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

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SPORT

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

2GB, Afternoons, 03/12/2024, Michael McLaren

Interview with Professor Anthony Rogers, Acting Director, Cardiovascular Division, The George Institute for Global Health, on a study showing rising rates of high blood pressure in Australia. Rogers cites data showing that 34% of adults are affected, leading to treatment costs exceeding \$1.2 billion annually. He attributes the trend to factors such as high salt intake, obesity, and alcohol consumption.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Medical trainees report appalling racism, harassment

West Australian, Other, 03/12/2024, Jack Gramenz

Health authorities say societal racism risks further deterioration in health outcomes and challenging attempts to improve life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. More than half of the Indigenous trainees surveyed by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency reported experiencing or witnessing racism, bullying, or sexual harassment, compared to a third of trainees in total.

Also reported by: [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [Shepparton News Online \(Online\)](#), [The Border Mail \(Online\)](#), [Bathurst Western Advocate \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

SWAMS opens optometry clinic in aim to improve Indigenous eye health

West Australian, Other, 03/12/2024, Oliver Lane Bunbury

Better access to culturally safe eye care for the South West region has taken a step forward after South West Aboriginal Medical Service officially opened its optometry service in Bunbury on Wednesday November 27. While the service has been operating since May, the opening was a chance to showcase the newly arrived "cutting edge" ZEISS technology which allows a more in-depth eye scan to diagnose symptoms.

[Read More](#)

Breaking down period stigma in remote communities

West Australian, Other, 04/12/2024, Keira Jenkins

Hoping to break down the stigma of talking about periods, researchers have developed a teaching guide on menstrual health for remote Indigenous communities. "We're talking about a biological process," University of Queensland school of public health adjunct lecturer Minnie King told AAP.

Also reported by: [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [The Border Mail \(Online\)](#), [Bathurst Western Advocate \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

Dengue alert issued for Erub (Darnley) Island, Torres Strait Islands

Adelaide Now, Other, 04/12/2024, Catherine Duffy

Health authorities have warned Torres Strait Island residents to be on alert after a new, locally acquired case of dengue fever was identified. Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service public health medical officer Dr Allison Hempenstall said the latest case of dengue fever had been identified on Erub (Darnley) Island.

[Read More](#)

Key vote to amend NACCHO's constitution defeated

National Indigenous Times, Other, 03/12/2024, Dechlan Brennan

A vote to amend the constitution of the peak body for Indigenous community-controlled health organisations has been defeated. It comes after criticism from the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, who expressed "serious concerns" about the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's (NACCHO) conduct ahead of its AGM and Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) in Canberra, on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country.

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NACCHO conference celebrates "remarkable achievements" of Aboriginal-led health services

National Indigenous Times, Other, 03/12/2024, Dechlan Brennan

The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) will hold their national conference in Canberra this week, celebrating the "remarkable achievements" of 27 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHOs) reaching significant milestones in their history.

[Read More](#)

New campaign calls for Indigenous Victorians interested in health and wellbeing careers

National Indigenous Times, Other, 03/12/2024, Dechlan Brennan

The peak body for Indigenous community-controlled health organisations in Victoria has launched a new campaign calling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into health and wellbeing careers. The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), who last month saw 59 students graduate from their Education Training Unit, said the campaign highlighted a vast legacy of cultural, health, and wellbeing knowledge which every Indigenous person carried.

[Read More](#)

Medical sector survey reveals disturbing level of racism faced by Indigenous trainees, and 29% considering leaving the field

National Indigenous Times, Other, 03/12/2024, Giovanni Torre

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical trainees report experiencing and/or witnessing racism at more than double the rate of colleagues, the latest Medical Training Survey (MTS) has found. The survey also found that almost 30 per cent of Indigenous medical trainees were are considering a career outside of medicine.

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Children's Ground, Goodman Foundation announce multi-year partnership to support Indigenous-led solutions in Mparntwe/Alice Springs

First Nations organisation Children's Ground has announced a five-year, \$9.57 million partnership with the Goodman Foundation. The partnership will help to scale the organisation's 25-year approach to Indigenous-led education, employment, health, economy, culture, and community wellbeing in Mparntwe/

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INTERIM AUSTRALIAN CDC

ABC, 7:30, 03/12/2024, Laura Tingle

Australia banned engineered stone this year due to its link to silicosis, a deadly lung disease caused by inhaling silica dust. Former stonemason Joshua Bucklow filed a compensation claim in 2021, which remains unresolved as manufacturers, suppliers, and employers dispute liability. Bucklow's lawyer, Jonathon Walsh, accuses Cedarstone of delaying tactics, but the company maintains it has provided safety information since 2008 and continues to contest claims in court.

Report continues on: [ABC \(Melbourne\)](#), [ABC \(Melbourne\)](#)

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Channel 10, 10 News First, 03/12/2024, Sharyn Ghidella

A Gold Coast obstetrician is advising families to reconsider the tradition of taking Santa photos this Christmas. It comes amid Australia's largest whooping cough outbreak, with nearly 43,000 cases recorded this year. Parents are urged to wait until after their babies have had their six-week vaccinations as newborns are particularly vulnerable to infections.

Also reported by: [Channel 10 \(Adelaide\)](#)

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Channel 9, Today , 03/12/2024, David Campbell and Sylvia Jeffreys

Free vaccinations against a potentially deadly respiratory virus are now available to pregnant women in Queensland. The state government has announced a \$13.5 million programme to protect expectant mothers from RSV. More than 39,000 cases have been recorded across the state this year, with around 400 new cases each week.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Pharma giant taken to court after breast implant recall

Canberra Times, Other, 03/12/2024, Miklos Bolza

Textured breast implants sold by a major pharmaceutical firm exposed Australian women to a higher risk of cancer and should never have been sold to the public, a lawsuit claims. [...] "The TGA has been advised that removal or replacement of macro-textured breast implants or tissue expanders in asymptomatic patients is not recommended," it wrote.

Also reported by: [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [Bathurst Western Advocate \(Online\)](#), [9News \(Online\)](#)

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Botox and cosmetic injectables industry booming but safety feared to be the cost

ABC Online, Other, 03/12/2024, Rhiana Whitson

So-called anti-wrinkle injections such as botox were once thought to be something women sought out

to defy the aging process, but increasingly that is no longer the case. [...] The TGA wants to protect vulnerable Australians from cosmetic enhancement advertising.

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OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

US mayor to address landmark Australian drug summit

West Australian, Other, 04/12/2024, Luke Costin

A mayor with a front-row seat to the most liberal drug decriminalisation policy in the US will join experts and decision-makers at a landmark Australian forum. Representatives from almost 300 organisations and dozens of politicians will gather on Wednesday for the Sydney leg of the NSW Drug Summit.

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FOOD STANDARDS

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AICIS

Filtration for 'forever chemicals'

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 04/12/2024, Carrie Fellner, Page 3

The state government will commission a new mobile filtration plant to clean up tap water supplies in the Blue Mountains that have been tainted by a plume of cancer-linked "forever chemicals". The \$3.4 million filtration unit is already being installed at the Cascade Water Filtration Plant in Katoomba, which supplies drinking water to nearly 50,000 residents across the area on the World Heritage List.

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

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Mobile fix to remove 'forever chemicals'

Sunraysia Daily, General News, 04/12/2024, Page 13

A mobile filtration system is being installed to remove "forever chemicals" from dams that provide drinking water for tens of thousands of people. Elevated levels of PFAS chemicals were found in untreated water flowing into the Cascade water filtration plant in the NSW Blue Mountains in September, with tests revealing quantities more than one and a half times safe levels stipulated in Australian drinking water guidelines.

Also reported by: [Shepparton News Online \(Online\)](#), [Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Bathurst Western Advocate \(Online\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#).

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

NSW Government to upgrade Blue Mountains water supply to prevent PFAS

The Australian, Other, 03/12/2024, Aisling Brennan

A new filtration system will be rolled out in the Blue Mountains in an effort to combat PFAS levels in the drinking water supply, after elevated levels were detected in recent months. The NSW Government will be installing an advanced PFAS treatment system at the Cascade Water Filtration Plant (WFP) designed to reduce levels of PFAS in the drinking water.

Also reported by: [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

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Dose of radioactivity in Merriwa drinking water safe to consume, testing reveals

Newcastle Herald, Other, 03/12/2024, Alanna Tomazin

Drinking water in Merriwa remains safe to consume after recent radionuclide testing found it is well below the national standards. Testing by Australia's Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) shows the water radioactivity dose ranges between 0.2 and 0.

[Read More](#)

New treatment system to remove PFAS from drinking water operational by end of year

Ballarat Courier, Other, 03/12/2024, Damien Madigan

The state government is installing a mobile PFAS treatment system to remove "forever chemicals" from the Blue Mountains water supply. Installation of the multi-million dollar technology at the Cascade Water Filtration Plant in Katoomba, NSW, is already underway and it is expected to be operational by the end of 2024.

Also reported by: [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [The Border Mail \(Online\)](#).

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New mobile treatment system to remove PFAS from drinking water after 'forever chemicals' found in Blue Mountains dams

ABC Online, Other, 03/12/2024, Xanthe Gregory

In a first for New South Wales, the state government is installing multi-million-dollar technology to remove "forever chemicals" from drinking water at a hotspot in the Blue Mountains where people have been consuming PFAS contaminated supplies. Sydney Water has been testing outlets for per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) across its network since June this year as the substances are linked to health issues, such as cancer.

[Read More](#)

Radio National, Life Matters, 03/12/2024, Hilary Harper & Beverley Wang

Blue Mountains residents say they are concerned they have been drinking water contaminated with a potentially deadly chemical since a road accident more than 30 years ago. PFAS is a chemical agent used by firefighters, and it can lead to health issues such as liver damage, fertility problems and cancer. Sydney Water is installing new water testing equipment, but Blue Mountains resident John Dee says some locals fear it has come years too late.

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