



Australian Government  
Department of Health  
and Aged Care

# TODAY'S NEWS

Tuesday, 17th December 2024

*Today's News* will not be sent on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, or New Year's Day. Prominent media items captured during this period will be reported in the following day's summary. Access to Isentia's Mediportal will be available during this period and any recurring reports set up in the platform will be delivered as normal.

Please contact [writing.support@health.gov.au](mailto:writing.support@health.gov.au) if you have any questions.

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## LINKS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The **[Courier Mail](#)** (Page 3) reports that QUT researchers at Brisbane's Translational Research Institute (TRI) have discovered how to treat challenging drug-resistant advanced melanomas by finding that samples of melanoma from a cancer model in mice could be killed by modified anti-microbial peptides from the Brazilian tarantula and Japanese horseshoe crab.
- The **[Herald Sun](#)** (Page 5) reports that paramedics have accepted a new wage deal after voting in favour of an EBA said to make Victoria one of Australia's highest-paying ambulance services.
- **[The Australian](#)** (Page 7) reports that Mental Health Australia is pushing for both sides of politics to have mental health as a priority ahead of the federal election following the results of a survey showing that nearly two-thirds of voters are more likely to back parties committed to increasing funding for the area.
- **[The Australian](#)** (Page 7) reports that a group of staff specialist psychiatrists threatened a mass walkout of 150 staff specialists on Monday after the NSW government said they would be

offered a yearly pay increase of zero per cent and any salary raises would need to be gained from “efficiency gains”

- The **West Australian** (Page 8) reports that West Australians are being urged by authorities to get an updated COVID booster vaccine as a new wave of infections sweeps the state with an average of 75 cases per day in the past week being admitted to hospital.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### Hospitals group blasts rescue plan

The Australian, Business News, 17/12/2024, Cameron England, Page 15

Health Minister Mark Butler's latest attempt to shore up the sustainability of the ailing private hospital sector is a dud that will do nothing to prevent further closures across the industry, the Australian Private Hospitals Association says. Mr Butler held the first meeting of the Private Health Chief Executive Officer Forum on Friday last week, where he presented a range of reforms to key decision-makers in the sector.

Also reported by: [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#).

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### Only one thing can end the \$22b private health war

Australian Financial Review, General News, 17/12/2024, James Thomson, Page 32

Australia's private hospital crisis appears to be heading to some sort of breaking point. It is just a question of whether that big moment is government intervention, or more hospitals shutting.

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### Eczema drug reprieve

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 16/12/2024, Page 2

Thousands of Australians living with severe eczema will now continue to have access to Duxipent (dupilimab) at an affordable price, after the Federal Government acted to ensure the medication remains on the PBS. The treatment has been on the PBS since 2021, but higher than expected prescription numbers meant that patients were at risk of the drug sponsor, Sanofi, withdrawing it from the PBS.

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### 'You've got to anticipate your illness': GP drought puts rural Aussies' lives at risk

A Current Affair, Other, 16/12/2024

Across the country, rural communities are at breaking point. Towns just a few hours from major centres struggle to help the sick as a shocking city-country health divide puts lives at risk. [...] Speaking to A Current Affair, Health Minister Mark Butler said he recognised "it's really tough, particularly in rural areas".

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### Channel 7, Sunrise, 16/12/2024, Monique Wright & David Woiwod

Interview with David Koch, Economic Director, Compare the Market, on private health insurance. Health Minister Mark Butler has warned private health insurers against using secretive tactics to hike premiums, threatening to name and shame offenders. Koch explains some insurers exploit a loophole by closing existing products and transferring customers to new ones with higher premiums, bypassing the annual cap on price increases.

Interview continues on: [Channel 7 \(Sydney\)](#).

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### Channel 9, A Current Affair, 16/12/2024, Leila McKinnon

Rural Australia is facing a critical doctor shortage, leaving towns like Mudgee, NSW, struggling with weeks-long waits and overburdened clinics. With only nine doctors for over 1,000 weekly appointments, clinics have stopped taking new patients. Local MP Andrew Gee warns lives are at risk. Health Minister Mark Butler acknowledges the severe healthcare challenges in rural Australia, including limited bulk billing and reduced access to care. He highlights measures like cutting red tape to recruit overseas-trained doctors, expanding rural medical training, and increasing urgent care clinics to address the crisis.

*Report continues on:* [Channel 9 \(Sydney\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Sydney\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Sydney\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Sydney\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Sydney\)](#).

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## Koori Radio, Blackchat, 16/12/2024, Lola Forester

The Albanese government, led by Health Minister Mark Butler, Assistant Minister Emma McBride, and Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, has launched the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy in partnership with Gayaa. Suicide rates among Indigenous Australians are over double those of the broader community, with 81 children aged 5–17 lost last year. The government will invest in culturally-led programs to improve social and emotional well-being.

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## 4BC, Drive, 16/12/2024, Gary Hardgrave

Interview with Samantha Byrne, the mother of three-year-old Luna, who provides an update on her daughter's battle with neuroblastoma. Hardgrave announces Luna recently completed frontline therapy and is set to begin treatment with the drug DFMO in early 2025 due to its temporary inclusion in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Byrne expresses relief and gratitude for the government's intervention, led by Health Minister Mark Butler, which has eased their financial and emotional burden.

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## ABC Radio Sydney, Mornings, 16/12/2024, Dom Knight

Interview with Professor Pat McGorry, mental health expert and 2010 Australian of the Year, who has criticised Australia's mental health system as 'fundamentally broken.' McGorry says the dismantling of outdated asylums without adequate replacement has left many with severe mental illness homeless, in prison, or unsupported. He says mental health accounts for 13-20% of the disease burden but receives less than 7% of the health budget. He urges the government to adopt evidence-based models and increase funding, noting that supportive leaders like Health Minister Mark Butler are engaging with the issue.

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[Back to Top](#)

## MINISTER WELLS

### Catholic sector welcomes Labor's 'pragmatic decision' in home aged care

CathNews, Other, 16/12/2024, Rebecca Comini

Catholic Health Australia has welcomed the Albanese Government's decision to support more flexible pricing to deliver high-quality aged care services in the home as part of the Support at Home program, which begins in July 2025. [...] Mr Lynch said Aged Care Minister Anika Wells "is to be congratulated for this pragmatic decision which will help the Support at Home program achieve its goals".

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### New leadership in regulation: Liz Hefren-Webb appointed Quality and Safety Commissioner

HelloCare, Other, 16/12/2024, Alex Jacobs

Aged care regulation will be under new leadership from January 20, 2025, following the appointment of

Liz Hefren-Webb as the new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner. [...] Meanwhile, the outgoing Commissioner, Ms Anderson, has been recognised by the Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells for her leadership during significant change.

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## Trax FM, 08:30 AIR News SA Edition, 16/12/2024

Over half of South Australian aged care homes have increased the use of antipsychotic drugs without prescriptions. Nearly a third of facilities performed worse than last year, while 60% saw improved star ratings, a measure by the Department of Health and Aged Care. Aged Care Minister Anika Wells highlights that since the introduction of star ratings two years ago, the number of homes with four- and five-star ratings has significantly increased.

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[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

### Koori Radio, Blackchat, 16/12/2024, Lola Forester

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[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER THWAITES

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## DEPARTMENT

### Doctors who speak out about colleagues face online abuse and death threats

ABC Online, Other, 16/12/2024, Adele Ferguson

Whether it's "Faux outrage" or online death threats, it's risky speaking out about Medicare and medical procedures. Vested interests have a lot to answer for. [...] She said the AMA played a key role in the establishment of the PSR as well as backed legislative changes to increase compliance powers, worked with the Department of Health and Aged Care to improve its compliance programs and invested significant effort in participating in a review of the entire Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to bring it up to date with contemporary practice.

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### GP registrar who shouted anti-COVID-19 vax tirade at AMA conference

## has suspension overturned

Australian Doctor, Other, 16/12/2024, Heather Saxena

A GP registrar suspended after shouting at an AMA conference that COVID-19 vaccines were killing Australians is free to return to medical practice after his self-represented court challenge. Dr William Bay was suspended under emergency powers just weeks after he interrupted the 2022 AMA National Conference in Sydney during a presentation by then-Chief Medical Officer Professor Paul Kelly.

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## GPs push back after out-of-town corporate picked to run urgent care clinic

Australian Doctor, Other, 16/12/2024, Rachel Carter

GPs say a corporate without an established practice in their town was chosen to run an urgent care clinic despite "well-established local practices" meeting the tender criteria. [...] Of the 86 urgent care clinics opened so far, it was the 29th run by ForHealth, according to the federal Department of Health and Aged Care.

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## National breast density policy review close

Cosmos Magazine, Other, 16/12/2024, Velentina Boulter

BreastScreen Australia is to update its position on breast density reporting early in the new year. Advocates for breast cancer awareness are calling for a change in the National BreastScreen Australia program, saying breast density should be included in mammogram reporting in the upcoming policy and funding review. A spokesperson for the Department of Health and Aged Care told Cosmos "The report is expected to be submitted to Government in early 2025."

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## GPs (maybe) one of few winners in ADHD report

The Medical Republic, Other, 16/12/2024, Holly Payne

The DoHAC has committed to putting its weight behind nationally consistent prescribing laws on ADHD medications ... but not much else. The RACGP was one of the only professional bodies welcoming any aspect of the federal government response to the ADHD Senate Inquiry, after the Department of Health and Aged Care elected to support just one of 15 recommendations.

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[Back to Top](#)

## COVID cases expected to peak around Christmas

West Australian, General News, 17/12/2024, John Flint, Page 8

Authorities are urging West Australians to get the updated COVID booster vaccine with a wave of infections continuing to sweep the State. Data from wastewater samples and the number of reported cases and hospital admissions all indicate increasing community transmission of COVID-19.

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

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## Vaccine delay deadly threat

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 17/12/2024, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 9

Red tape stops new-generation medicine Lifesaving new-generation vaccines remain tied up in red tape as the country experiences the worst potentially deadly pneumococcal disease outbreak in 20 years, immunisation experts warn.

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## Seventy-five rushed to hospital per day in WA as Covid outbreak booms before Christmas

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 16/12/2024

Another wave of Covid-19 is surging across one Aussie state, with authorities urging residents to have a new booster jab. Australians have being urged to stay at home if they are unwell as another wave of Covid-19 surges in one state.

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## Surge in cases of invasive pneumococcal disease spark calls for federal govt to prioritise rollout of newer vaccines for broader protection

Sky News Australia, Other, 16/12/2024, Gemma Crotty

Cases of invasive pneumococcal disease have surged in recent times, prompting an immunisation advocacy group to call for the prioritisation of a rollout of newer vaccines that offer a broader protection against the infection. Invasive pneumococcal is an infection caused by the bacteria streptococcus pneumoniae, which can invade parts of the body and infect the lungs, brain or bloodstream.

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## WA calls for free meningococcal vax

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 16/12/2024

The Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) has called on the WA Government to fund a Meningococcal B vaccination program for children two years and under and adolescents aged 15 to 19. It comes following the Meningitis Centre Australia's Meningococcal B Memory Tree event last week.

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## New COVID-19 booster targets new strains of the virus

WA Health, Other, 16/12/2024

The Department of Health is encouraging people to make sure their COVID-19 vaccinations are up to date in the lead up to the festive season. The advice comes as surveillance data – from wastewater, and the number of reported cases and hospitalisations – indicates increasing community transmission of COVID-19 since mid-October.

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## 'Automatic' excuse to justify Labor spending

The Australian, General News, 17/12/2024, Jack Quail & Geoff Chambers, Page 1

Jim Chalmers's budget update will bake-in \$25.1bn in extra expenditure underwriting what the government claims is "unavoidable and automatic" spending, with some leading economists declaring Labor's financial path is not inevitable and offsets should still be made. [...] Yet even with Labor's reforms, aged care will continue to remain among the top five most expensive line items in the federal budget, alongside payments to the states and territories, the Age Pension, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and medical benefits.

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

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## Calls to allow people with dementia access to voluntary assisted dying

Illawarra Mercury, Other, 16/12/2024, Desiree Savage

Dementia is a complex, progressive and life-limiting condition with one philosopher calling to allow voluntary assisted dying (VAD) for those living with the condition. Professor Peter Singer spoke openly on the Neil Mitchell asks Why? podcast about his beliefs around euthanasia in different settings, especially for people with dementia having the right to access voluntary assisted dying.

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

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## 'Misleading': NDIS provider taken to court

Toowoomba Chronicle, Other, 16/12/2024, Clare Armstrong

Australia's competition watchdog is taking an NDIS provider to court alleging the company made "false" and "misleading" claims about products sold to customers who were elderly or with a disability. Sydney-based Ausnew Home Care Service, a registered my aged care and NDIS provider operating nationally selling everything from pillows to mobility scooters, has been accused of falsely implying products were on limited time sales as well as tagging some items as "NDIS approved" – an endorsement it does not have authority to make.

Also reported by: [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#).

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## Creeping spend rips at seams of tattered federal budget

West Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Jacob Shteyman

More than \$16 billion in automatic spending increases, and \$8.8 billion in "unavoidable" spending to extend terminating measures, will further inhibit the government's ability to pay for its policy platform after flagging a downgrade in tax receipts. [...] It includes \$3.6 billion in extra payments through the aged pension, \$3.1 billion in childcare subsidy payments, \$2.6 billion in schools funding, \$2.3 billion in health benefits and \$1.8 billion in additional payments for veterans.

Also reported by: [Ballarat Courier \(Online\)](#), [Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser \(Online\)](#).

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## Catholic sector welcomes Labor's 'pragmatic decision' in home aged care

CathNews, Other, 16/12/2024, Rebecca Comini

Catholic Health Australia has welcomed the Albanese Government's decision to support more flexible pricing to deliver high-quality aged care services in the home as part of the Support at Home program, which begins in July 2025. [...] Mr Lynch said Aged Care Minister Anika Wells "is to be congratulated for this pragmatic decision which will help the Support at Home program achieve its goals".

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)



## Get on the beers ... at 17

Herald Sun, General News, 17/12/2024, Page 2

More than 40 per cent of Australian parents believe 17 is an acceptable drinking age. The Flinders University survey also revealed that parents are more likely to supply alcohol to their underage children if they believe other parents supply alcohol. Only 11 per cent admit to supplying alcohol for unsupervised use despite 45 per cent believing that this practice is common among their peers.

Also reported by: [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#), [West Australian \(Perth\)](#).

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## Measles detected in the community in Brisbane's north

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 16/12/2024, Catherine Strohfeldt

A two-year-old boy has tested positive for measles, with Queensland Health warning residents the child was infectious in Brisbane's northern suburbs since December 9. [...] The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare said after a two-dose vaccination scheme was introduced in late 1992, case numbers have dropped significantly.

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## Govt LGBTIQ health plan applauded

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 16/12/2024

The Government launched a 10-year action plan to improve the health and wellbeing of the LGBTIQ community last week, a move applauded by peak health and medical bodies, including the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) and Australian Medical Association (AMA). The National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ People 2025-2035 features five key focus areas, including strengthening preventative health and building health literacy; enhancing accessibility, availability and safety of health care services; and ensuring workforce capability and capacity across both mainstream and LGBTIQ led services.

[Read More](#)

## Channel 9, Today , 16/12/2024, Dan Anstey and Sam Armytage

Victorians are being warned to brace for one of the most dangerous days of the year as temperatures rise into the high 40s. Many areas face high fire danger due to hot, windy conditions, isolated thunderstorms, and dry lightning. Authorities have issued a total fire ban, and Ambulance Victoria is urging people to stay cool, hydrated, and avoid the sun.

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[Back to Top](#)

## CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

### NDIS given \$1b to curb cost blowouts

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 17/12/2024, David Crowe & Natassia Chrysanthos, Page 1

The federal government will spend \$1 billion as it reboots assessments for the National Disability Insurance Scheme after years of argument about who should qualify for support, scaling up the key agencies charged with bringing its spiralling costs under control. The investment in 1000 more staff and a crackdown on NDIS fraud is part of a broader spending program to be revealed in today's mid-year budget update.

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### Promising breakthrough

Ballarat Courier, General News, 17/12/2024, Michelle Smith, Page 1

Ballarat cancer researchers have discovered how aggressive brain cancer "hides" from the immune system, unlocking potential future pathways to improve treatment. Patients diagnosed with glioblastoma, one of the most aggressive forms of brain cancer, live for an average of just 12 to 18 months after diagnosis, but scientists at the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute have identified a protein that tumours release which stops the immune system from working properly.



## Eczema drug reprieve

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 16/12/2024, Page 2

Thousands of Australians living with severe eczema will now continue to have access to Duxipent (dupilimab) at an affordable price, after the Federal Government acted to ensure the medication remains on the PBS. The treatment has been on the PBS since 2021, but higher than expected prescription numbers meant that patients were at risk of the drug sponsor, Sanofi, withdrawing it from the PBS.

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## Breast Screening: A vital tool for early detection

SBS, Other, 16/12/2024

Breast screening is a critical method for the early detection of breast cancer, offering women an opportunity to identify potential issues before symptoms arise. A/Professor Nirmala Pathmanathan, Executive Director of the Westmead Breast Cancer Institute in Western Sydney, NSW, highlights the significance of this free service and its role in improving health outcomes for women.

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## Research shows too many Australian adults are struggling with the challenges of hearing loss

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 16/12/2024

Research shows too many Australian adults are struggling with the challenges of hearing loss with 1 in 2 admitting to having concerns. With an estimated 7.8 million people expected to have a hearing loss in 2060, new research from Hearing Australia shows that one in two Australian adults admit to having hearing problems but only seven per cent have taken action to address it.

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## Channel 9, Nine News, 16/12/2024, Peter Overton

Scientists at the Translational Research Institute are using molecules from spiders and crabs to develop treatments for skin cancer and untreatable melanomas. By replicating amino acid sequences from creatures like the Japanese horseshoe crab and Brazilian tarantula, they have created peptides that target and kill drug-resistant melanoma cells without affecting healthy cells. The Cancer Council says melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, is expected to affect one in 17 Australians by age 85.

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## ABC Radio Perth, Statewide Mornings, 16/12/2024, Michelle Stanley

Interview with Associate Professor Wendy Ingman, University of Adelaide, on research into the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in predicting breast cancer. Ingman notes the limitations of current mammography technology, such as the difficulty in detecting subtle features within dense breast tissue. She explains that AI can spot patterns in mammograms that radiologists may miss, improving the prediction of breast cancer risk.

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[Back to Top](#)

## PRIMARY CARE

### Hospitals group blasts rescue plan

The Australian, Business News, 17/12/2024, Cameron England, Page 15

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## 'Unavoidable' \$25bn fiscal hit

Herald Sun, General News, 17/12/2024, Jessica Wang, Page 5

Upward revisions in pensioner payments and childcare subsidies, plus billions in "unavoidable spending" will dent the budget bottom line by more than \$25bn, federal Labor has warned ahead of its mid-year budget update. The additional spending is almost guaranteed to be seized on by the opposition, as the government moves to dampen expectations ahead of Wednesday's Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook release.

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

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## GPs hold safety fears on UTI plan

Hobart Mercury, General News, 17/12/2024, bridget clarke, Page 6

Pharmacists prescribe for it Tasmanian GPs remain unconvinced by a pilot project which allows pharmacists to prescribe antibiotics for urinary tract infections, saying there is not enough data to show the change is safe. The state government launched a 12-month program to expand the role of pharmacists in March, allowing them to prescribe antibiotics to women aged 18-65 presenting with uncomplicated UTI symptoms.

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## \$1.7m health training boost

Hobart Mercury, Editorials, 17/12/2024, Page 14

Investing \$1.7m in infrastructure upgrades for eight general practices across Tasmania is a strategically sound move to strengthen rural health support and futureproof the state's healthcare system. The Single Employer Model (SEM) program, funded jointly by state and federal governments, is not merely an investment in bricks and mortar but a commitment to nurturing the next generation of medical professionals and ensuring equitable healthcare access for rural communities.

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## Regional GPs funding boost

Burnie Advocate, General News, 17/12/2024, Benjamin Seeder, Page 1

Eighteen medical clinics across the state will share in \$1.7 million in state government funding in a scheme designed to pull more GPs to regional areas of Tasmania. HealthMinister Jacquie Petrusma said the grants, whose recipients include the NewsteadMedical Group in Launceston and the Patrick Street Clinic in Ulverstone, will enable clinics to expand and upgrade, boosting their capacity to train doctors.

Also reported by: [Launceston Examiner \(Launceston\)](#).

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## Eighteen general practices receive funding for infrastructure upgrades

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 16/12/2024, Simon Mcguire

General practices across Tasmania are set to receive infrastructure upgrades through a unique, 'nation-leading', training model only found in this state. How clinics will use the money.

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## Patients asked to pay \$129 for medical records after centre's sudden closure

Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser, Other, 16/12/2024, Eliza Spencer

Former Secretary and Treasurer of the NSW State Committee, Angus Australia, Richard Buck, was left without a GP after the Boorowa Medical Centre closed its doors suddenly. Blood tests, health checks and chronic illness care have been dropped for patients in Boorowa, after the sudden closure of the Boorowa Medical Centre.

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## 'You've got to anticipate your illness': GP drought puts rural Aussies' lives at risk

A Current Affair, Other, 16/12/2024

Across the country, rural communities are at breaking point. Towns just a few hours from major centres struggle to help the sick as a shocking city-country health divide puts lives at risk. [...] Speaking to A Current Affair, Health Minister Mark Butler said he recognised "it's really tough, particularly in rural areas".

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## States warn on forged S8 scripts

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 16/12/2024, Megan Haggan

Pharmacists are being warned not to dispense on suspected forged electronic scripts which are being presented around the country Health authorities in both NSW and Tasmania have warned pharmacists to be on the alert for forged electronic scripts.

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[Back to Top](#)

## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

### MPs urged to act on mental health fears

The Australian, General News, 17/12/2024, Rhiannon Down & Sarah Ison, Page 7

The peak body for mental health is calling on both sides of politics to prioritise mental health ahead of the federal election, as new polling reveals nearly two-thirds of voters are more likely to back parties committed to increasing funding for the area. Mental Health Australia is pushing for increased investment in mental health prevention and treatment, saying the financial cost that psychological conditions placed on the health system were not being met under the current funding arrangement.

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

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### More steps equals less depression risk

Courier Mail, General News, 17/12/2024, Page 13

People who walk a higher number of steps each day are less likely to have depressive symptoms. University of Castilla-La Mancha researchers in Spain combined the results of 33 previous studies looking at the link between step count and depression.

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### Govt shifts \$1.6b in Defence spending

Canberra Times, General News, 17/12/2024, Brittny Levinson, Page 3

The federal government will redirect \$1.6 billion of spending in the Defence portfolio to other priority areas, including to help deliver its response to the royal commission into defence and veteran suicide. The reprioritised funds will also be used to invest in training and retention in the Defence Force, which is struggling to meet its recruitment targets, and to continue providing support for Ukraine.

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

## Risk investing in the status quo

Canberra Times, General News, 17/12/2024, Sebastian Rosenberg, Page 16

A national newspaper recently carried a serious warning from the Australian Medical Association (AMA) about the state of the nation's mental health system, claiming it is failing those who need it the most. The AMA points to chronic underfunding, severe workforce shortages and inadequate staffing, the complexity of presentations, and increasing patient loads as key factors contributing to a system reaching breaking point.

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## My 10-point plan to fix the mental health system

The Australian, Other, 16/12/2024, Matt Berriman

Mental health is talked about so much, but why aren't we seeing the action we need? As a former chair of Mental Health Australia and an entrepreneur with more than 15 years' experience in getting things done, here is my 10-point plan for reform.

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## Radio National, Breakfast, 16/12/2024, Sally Sara

Interview with Vanessa Marsden, long-term relieving principal, Saint George Hospital School, on an outreach program for students with mental health challenges that is seeing remarkable success. Sara says as part of the program, students have co-composed and performed a song, 'Waves,' which was created to inspire those facing mental health struggles. Marsden says the program, located off-site at Arncliffe West Infants School, helps students re-engage with schoolwork and provides comprehensive well-being support.

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

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[Back to Top](#)

## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Psychiatrists threaten mass walkout amid system crisis

The Australian, General News, 17/12/2024, Natasha Robinson, Page 7

Staff specialist psychiatrists are threatening a mass walkout after the NSW government failed to offer them a single extra dollar in pay, despite a critically depleted workforce, after a mutiny by the profession from the public system. An industrial dispute between the public sector psychiatry workforce and the government reached a flashpoint of high tension on Monday night when a group leading negotiations over pay and conditions was told that 150 staff specialists were prepared to immediately walk off the job as the mental health system in NSW teeters on the brink of collapse.

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

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### A Ambos vote to accept pay deal

Herald Sun, General News, 17/12/2024, Sarah Booth, Page 5

Paramedics have accepted a new wage deal after voting in favour of an EBA said to make Victoria one of Australia's highest-paying ambulance services. The deal, accepted in principal by the Victorian Ambulance Union in September, came after a lengthy, sevenmonth industrial action campaign that put

paramedics' burnout in the spotlight and saw crews write slogans on vehicles and stop taking patients' billing details.

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## Australian Nurses Federation makes new pay offer increase of 12.5 per cent

West Australian, Other, 16/12/2024, Jessica Page

A damaging election battle over nurses and midwives' pay might be avoided, after the Cook Government tabled a new 12.5 per cent offer. The Australian Nursing Federation reported the 12.5 per cent increase would result in real wage increases of more than 18 per cent for some nurses due to amended base pay rates.

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## We need good nurses, and they need decent pay

Newcastle Herald, Other, 17/12/2024

The acute shortage of nursing staff in both private and public hospitals makes one aware of how hard the permanent "always turn up for their shift" staff are slaving away to keep us safe when we are patients. I was shocked to see how often good nurses were called upon to work "doublers" (i.e. the next shift's extra hours) on top of the allocated eight-hour shift already worked. Good nurses are being driven into the ground.

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## Channel 10, 10 News First, 16/12/2024, Sandra Sully

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park has announced security guards at Sydney's Royal North Shore are trialling body-worn cameras to record aggressive incidents and deter threats against staff. The year-long program will expand to 15 hospitals statewide, but nurses and midwives argue the real issue is chronic underfunding and low wages. The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Union says there is a staffing crisis driven by low pay in Australia's most expensive city, with 70% of surveyed participants supporting their push for a 15% wage increase.

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## Channel 7, Seven News, 16/12/2024, Mark Ferguson & Angela Cox

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park has announced that security staff in public hospitals will begin using body cameras to address rising violence against medical staff. The trial, starting at Royal North Shore, will expand to 15 hospitals across Sydney and regional NSW, with a 12-month review to assess its impact. Nurses argue that staffing shortages are fuelling aggression in hospitals.

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## Channel 7, Seven News, 16/12/2024, Susannah Carr & Rick Ardon

WA nurses and midwives are on the brink of securing a historic wages deal with the Cook government, with some nurses set to receive an 18% increase, the highest ever offered in WA. The average wage increase across the profession is 15%, positioning nurses and midwives among the highest-paid in Australia. Australian Nurses Federation members will vote on the offer over the weekend.

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[Back to Top](#)

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[Back to Top](#)

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[Back to Top](#)

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[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### 2GB, Breakfast, 16/12/2024, Ben Fordham

Interview with Georgina Long, Co-medical Chair, Melanoma Institute Australia, on the dangers of tanning. Long says that Australia's 'bronzed culture' is contributing to the country having the highest melanoma rates in the world. She highlights that over 95% of melanomas are preventable, and tanning is a form of skin trauma that can lead to skin cancer. She urges people, especially young Australians, to change their attitudes towards tanning, seek shade, and use sun protection.

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[Back to Top](#)

## SPORT

### Money to help women golfers

Sunraysia Daily, General News, 16/12/2024, Lewis Nancekivell, Page 3

Red Cliffs Golf Club is expected to receive almost half a million dollars in Federal Government grant money to accommodate better facilities for women. The money is coming from the Department of Health and Ageing and is aimed at removing barriers, addressing discrimination, and promoting equality for women in sports.

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### Channel 9, Today , 16/12/2024, Dan Anstey & Sam Armytage

A bold new design for the Gabba has been unveiled as part of Brisbane's preparations for the 2032 Olympics. The proposal, presented by architecture firm Hayes Anderson Lynch, suggests rebuilding the Gabba on its existing site to create a 55,000-seat stadium with a major concourse to link it directly to the new Cross River Rail station. It comes amid growing calls for a new stadium at Victoria Park. The Gabba is scheduled to host an Ashes Test next year, but will not host any Tests between 2026 and 2027 due to Olympic-related uncertainty.

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### ABC Radio Perth, Statewide Mornings, 16/12/2024, Michelle Stanley

Interview with Dr Neale Fong, chair, WA Institute of Sport, on allegations of predatory behaviour by former pole vault coach Alex Parnov. Fong explains that WAIS's new board, appointed last year, acted swiftly upon learning of the allegations in late November. He acknowledges previous failures in addressing the issue but assures that the board is now focused on supporting affected athletes and improving safeguarding measures. He says current protocols are in place to protect athletes, including updated child protection policies and improved coach education.

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[Back to Top](#)

## Web of discovery in melanoma treatment

Courier Mail, General News, 17/12/2024, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 3

Queensland scientists have made a groundbreaking discovery into how to treat challenging drug-resistant advanced melanomas and tarantulas have played a critical part. QUT researchers at Brisbane's Translational Research Institute (TRI) have modified the anti-microbial peptides from the Brazilian tarantula and Japanese horseshoe crab and found they could kill samples of melanoma cells from a cancer model in mice that were resistant to other cancer therapies.

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

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## Shock new find about older Australian smokers

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 17/12/2024, Emma Kirk, Page 8

New research has revealed older Australians who smoke cigarettes are turning to cannabis as the price of tobacco increases. The federal government increases tax on tobacco twice a year which has seen the price of cigarettes increase from a few dollars in the 1990s to about \$70 for a 25 pack today, making Australia the most expensive place in the world to buy cigarettes.

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## Tryptamine's psilocin infusion study reveals solid results in obese

The Courier Mail, Other, 16/12/2024, Special Report

The phase 1b trial of novel IV-infused psilocin formulation TRP-8803 in healthy obese volunteers has met Tryptamine's objectives. Special Report: Clinical-stage biotech Tryptamine Therapeutics (ASX:TYP) has reported that the phase 1b trial of its novel IV-infused psilocin formulation TRP-8803 in healthy obese volunteers has achieved its objectives and is consistent with non-obese healthy human volunteers.

Also reported by: [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#).

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## Channel 10, 10 News First, 16/12/2024, Georgina Hill

A specialist team at Sydney's Northern Beaches Hospital has performed the country's first fully robotic heart surgery, a less invasive procedure that enables faster recovery. The endoscopic coronary bypass operates on a beating heart, avoiding the need for a heart-lung machine and reducing surgical trauma. Patient John, who would have faced weeks of recovery with traditional surgery, calls the experience life-changing.

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[Back to Top](#)

## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### ABC Radio Darwin , Breakfast, 16/12/2024, Adam Steer

Interview with Rebecca Matthews, audiologist, NT Hearing Services, on the DrumBeat.ai project in collaboration with Microsoft. Matthews explains that the project uses AI to diagnose ear diseases, particularly otitis media and middle ear infections, by analysing images of eardrums taken with a digital otoscope. She says DrumBeat.ai uses data from the Aboriginal remote population in the Northern Territory, which has significantly higher levels of ear disease. She notes the program will be featured on Microsoft's The Prompt series, starring comedian Trevor Noah.

Interview continues on: [ABC Radio Darwin \(Darwin\)](#).

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[Back to Top](#)



## Killer disease 20-year high

Herald Sun, General News, 17/12/2024, Page 13

Australian rates of pneumococcal disease a life-threatening bacterial infection that can attack the lungs, brain and bloodstream have hit a 20-year high. The Immunisation Foundation of Australia has revealed that more than 4500 cases of severe pneumococcal, known as invasive pneumococcal disease, have been recorded in the last 24 months (2269 in 2023 and 2250 in 2024 so far.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#)

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## 'Three-fold challenge': Immunisation Foundation of Australia warns deadly Pneumococcal disease hits 20-year high

The Australian, Other, 16/12/2024, Duncan Evans

A fatal disease that can strike down babies and little children has grown to a 20-year high in Australia, a leading health advocacy group has warned. Immunisation Foundation of Australia on Monday said cases of the invasive pneumococcal disease – a life-threatening bacterial infection that attacks the lungs, brain and bloodstream – had hit 4500 since early 2023, marking a 20-year-high.

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## 'Severe' outbreak of deadly pneumococcal disease that killed Brisbane baby Mabel sparks calls for new vaccine rollout

9News, Other, 16/12/2024

The deadly disease that stole baby Mabel from her doting parents Carly and John Goya has reared its ugly head again in Australia. [...] The IFA warns next year could see a fresh spike in deadly cases if vaccinations don't keep up with the outbreak. It is urging the federal government to prioritise a rollout of new, broader-coverage pneumococcal vaccines which are TGA-approved.

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## Urgent warning issued as new Covid wave hits Western Australia days out from Christmas - here's what you need to know

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 17/12/2024, Ashley Nickel

Covid cases in WA have skyrocketed Hospitalisations tipped to soar over Christmas Aussies who feel unwell have been urged to isolate and stay home as a fresh wave of Covid-19 runs rampant on one side of the country. Cases of the Omicron subvariants have skyrocketed in Western Australia in recent weeks with an average 75 infected patients admitted to hospital daily.

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## 4BC, Breakfast , 16/12/2024, Peter Fegan

Experts are warning of a possible increase in rates of pneumococcal disease due to declining vaccine rates. Just a fifth of Australians in their 70s have been immunised against the bacterial disease. University of Queensland Associate Professor Paul Griffin says the federal government needs to prioritise the rollout of a newer and more effective vaccine.

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[Back to Top](#)

# THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

## Spike sparks call for vaccine rollout

Ballarat Courier, General News, 17/12/2024, Page 6

Cases of a life-threatening bacterial infection that can attack the lungs and brain have hit a 20-year high, prompting calls for the rollout of newer generation vaccines. [...] The immunisation foundation is

urging the federal government to prioritise broader-coverage pneumococcal vaccines that have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

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## Call for rollout of vaccines after bacteria outbreak

West Australian, Other, 16/12/2024, Tess Ikonomou

Cases of a life-threatening bacterial infection that can attack the lungs and brain have hit a 20-year high, prompting calls for the rollout of newer generation vaccines. [...] The immunisation foundation is urging the federal government to prioritise broader-coverage pneumococcal vaccines that have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Also reported by: [Bathurst Western Advocate \(Online\)](#).

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## Sleep supplement melatonin prescribed to almost half of youth detainees in South Australia

ABC Online, Other, 16/12/2024, Stephanie Richards

Almost half of incarcerated children at South Australia's youth detention centre have been prescribed a supplement to help them fall asleep, amid concerns about "unusual" night-time behaviours. [...] Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) recommends that melatonin only be prescribed to children with certain diagnoses — including autism spectrum disorder or Smith-Magenis syndrome — who have trouble sleeping.

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## Needle-free epinephrine closer

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 16/12/2024

Needle-phobic people with life-threatening allergies can look forward to an alternative epinephrine delivery method - a new nasal epinephrine spray called neffy. [...] Recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US, an application for approval has now been lodged with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) by Australian licensee CSL Seqirus.

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## Channel 9, Nine News, 16/12/2024, Andrew Lofthouse and Melissa Downes

Australia is facing its worst pneumococcal outbreak in 20 years, with over 2,200 cases reported in 2024. Despite newer, more effective vaccines being approved by the TGA, they remain unavailable in the national immunisation schedule, leaving families vulnerable to severe diseases. Carly and John Goya, who lost their six-month-old daughter Mabel to a pneumococcal strain not covered by the older vaccine, are urging the government to urgently fund and roll out updated vaccines to save lives.

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[Back to Top](#)

## OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

### Taxes sparked 'war'

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 17/12/2024, Page 16

The troubles with the so called illicit tobacco "war" is not the fault of the Victoria government, but the unrelenting cash grab from federal government tobacco pricing policies. What might have begun as a naive belief that increasing tobacco prices would stop people from smoking, has turned into an irresistible cash cow.

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[Back to Top](#)

## Increase in fines for bad eateries

Daily Telegraph, General News, 17/12/2024, David Barwell, Page 9

A hefty increase in food safety fines is being considered for NSW eateries as part of plans to reign in the number of restaurants and other food-related businesses caught breaching safety and hygiene standards. The NSW food regulator has released plans to more than double the amount of current food safety fines from \$880 to \$1980 in a bid to boost compliance rates in the industry.

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

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## Have a look before you cook

West Australian, General News, 17/12/2024, Page 10

The Food Safety Information Council is advising Aussies to check cooking, storage instructions and expiry dates, especially use-by dates, on food packaging this festive season. The council's recent survey found that only three out of every 10 consumers said they always read cooking and storage instructions, six in 10 always read use-by dates and five in 10 always read best-before dates.

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