



Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care

TODAY'S NEWS

Wednesday, 18th 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 if you have any questions.

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LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **The Australian** (Page 1) reports that in a major and developing underpayment scandal, it has been revealed that for 12 years thousands of psychologists and mental health social workers providing around-the-clock trauma counselling for Australia's serving soldiers and military veterans have not been paid up to \$50 million in superannuation.
- The **Herald Sun** (Page 1) reports that a Murdoch Children's Research Institute study has found that almost three-quarters of Melbourne teenagers have experienced clinically significant levels of anxiety or depression by the age of 18 and no other research had ever found such high cumulative levels for teenagers from any country, saying urgent action "outside our clinics" was required to tackle the "considerable" problem.
- **The Age** (Page 2) reports that Coroner Simon McGregor is asking for consideration from those who scrutinised the state's voluntary assisted dying program after recently reviewing the cases

of people who had died by suicide after failing to meet the strict eligibility requirements for voluntary assisted dying.

- **The Age** (Page 5) reports that stronger whistleblower protections are being considered by the Royal Melbourne Hospital to ensure medical registrars and junior doctors are more likely to come forward if they have witnessed a colleague participating in unethical conduct.
- The **Sydney Morning Herald** (Page 8) reports that the Coalition has been accused of “coming after Medicare and medicines and pensions,” by Treasurer Jim Chalmers at a press conference in Canberra yesterday.
- The **Courier Mail** (Page 8) reports that doctors have been advised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration to limit prescribing hormone replacement therapy medications to new patients due to a shortage of more than 12 different medications.

MINISTER BUTLER

Citywide raids net \$2m illicit vape haul

West Australian, General News, 18/12/2024, Katina Curtis, Page 22

More than 60,000 illegal vapes worth almost \$2 million have been seized in raids on convenience stores and other retailers across Perth. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said shop owners were on notice that they must stick to the laws.

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

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Greater care is coming to NT

Northern Territory News, General News, 18/12/2024, Gera Kazakov, Page 12

Territorians now have more options to choose from when seeking urgent medical care, thanks to three new urgent care clinics opening in locations from the Top End to the Red Centre. New urgent care clinics are now open in Ali Curung, Lajamanu, and Galiwin'ku, in what federal health and aged care minister Mark Butler called a "game changer".

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).

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Free mental health support in the northern suburbs

Bunyip, General News, 18/12/2024, Page 3

New and expectant parents in the northern suburbs will get free, personalised support with a new perinatal mental health centre to be established in Elizabeth. [...] "It's common to be overwhelmed and tired during pregnancy and as a new parent, but many Australians are faced with far greater challengers," Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care Mark Butler said.

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'Distressing result' as grandmother jailed in Japan

Koori Mail, General News, 18/12/2024, Page 5

The jailing of an Australian grandmother in Japan is "really distressing" for her family, the federal government has acknowledged as it committed to doing all it could to help her. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler made the promise a day after Donna Nelson, 58, from Perth, was sentenced to six years for smuggling methamphetamine into Tokyo in January 2023.

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ABC Alice Springs, Breakfast, 17/12/2024, Stewart Brash

Interview with Federal Health Minister Mark Butler on new urgent care clinics in the NT. Brash reports that the Mparntwe Urgent Care Clinic in Alice Springs has been helping reduce pressure on the local hospital's emergency department, with three new clinics planned for Ali Curung, Lajamanu, and Galiwin'ku. Butler highlights the success of the Mparntwe clinic, which has seen around 13,000 patients

since its opening and operates seven days a week for walk-ins. He says the clinics aim to decrease non-urgent emergency department visits and enhance patient care.

Interview continues on: [ABC Alice Springs \(Alice Springs\)](#).

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MINISTER WELLS

Federal funds to support Hawthorn Village works

Myrtleford Times, General News, 18/12/2024, Page 3

Bright residential aged care facility, Hawthorn Village, will commence a major refurbishment next year after attracting federal funding support. [...] Minister for Aged Care, Anika Wells, said Hawthorn Village was one of more than 50 infrastructure projects funded by the \$250 million in the latest round of grant funding.

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\$3.2 Million Boost for Gender Equality in Sport

Northern Rivers Times, General News, 19/12/2024, Ian Rogers, Page 63

The Australian Government has announced an additional \$3.2 million investment to support women in coaching, officiating, and sports administration. [...] Minister for Sport, the Hon Anika Wells said: "The ASC's WLIS and Women in High Performance Coaching programs are about representation.

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Kim Sutton continues her efforts to improve aged care sector

The Courier Mail, Other, 17/12/2024, Jessica Klein

The Albanese government's 'landmark' aged care reforms are yet to impress two Darling Downs women who are on a crusade for justice. [...] After having made dozens of requests since June to meet with Aged Care Minister Anika Wells, Ms Sutton and two of her close supporters finally met with Ms Wells in November.

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

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New free dementia training

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 17/12/2024, Jodie Wolf

The Australian government has announced a new educational resource for aged care workers that aims to boost their ability to support people living with dementia. [...] Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells said the free resource would give health and aged care workers a chance to better understand the benefits of meaningful engagement.

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Minister for Aged Care emphasises the value of dementia care training

HelloCare, Other, 17/12/2024, Georgie Waters

Free dementia training for aged care workers is now more accessible, with the recent release of a new government-funded module. [...] Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells explained why the Australian Government allocated funding to further the education of aged care workers about dementia care.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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DEPARTMENT

Medicare rebates too low for national lung cancer screening program to work, radiologists warn

Australian Doctor, Other, 17/12/2024, Mohana Basu

Radiologists say the proposed Medicare rebates for the upcoming National Lung Cancer Screening Program, which will be mandatory to bulk-bill, are around \$100 too low. [...] The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) said it had warned the federal Department of Health and Aged Care that the proposed rebates were too low to ensure the program's sustainability.

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PHN review a waste of \$2m: they're not the problem

The Medical Republic, Other, 17/12/2024, Jeremy Knibbs

The \$2m Boston Consulting Group PHN review is in danger of missing the elephant in the room: PHNs have never been run by DoHAC in the manner they were originally designed to be. [...] If I'd done just a tiny bit of homework back then by identifying where PHNs sit in the Department of Health and Aged Care structure I conceivably would have been immediately most of the way to an answer.

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Strengthening Medicare grant uptake at 93%

The Medical Republic, Other, 17/12/2024, Holly Payne

Getting funding to upgrade digital capabilities was the most popular part of the federal government's \$220 million GP grant program. [...] On Monday, the Department of Health and Aged Care published an external review of the grant program and rollout, conducted by Nous Group.

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VACCINES

Covid on the surge

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 18/12/2024, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 11

Queenslanders are so fed up with almost five years of Covid-19 that uptake of the newest booster shot is poor, contributing to escalating cases in the state. Queensland Health's data shows a steady incline in cases from 1029 cases in the week starting November 11 to December 2 which recorded 1838 cases. There have been 67,892 cases so far in 2024.

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West Aussies urged to get booster jabs arrive as COVID wave hits hard

before Christmas

Perth Now, Other, 17/12/2024, John Flint

A new updated COVID booster vaccine is now available to West Australians, while a wave of infections across the State continues to surge. WA Health is urging people to make sure their vaccinations are up to date in the lead up to the festive season.

[Read More](#)

This disease can kill within days. Most Australians can't get the new, life-saving vaccine

SBS, Other, 17/12/2024, Amy Hall

Rates of invasive pneumococcal disease are at their highest levels since 2004. While more effective vaccines have been approved for use in Australia, most at-risk people can't get them.

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Seniors stuck in hospital says mayor

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 18/12/2024, Glen Humphries, Page 4

Senior citizens are taking up space in the region's hospitals because there is nowhere else for them to go, according to Wollongong Lord Mayor Tania Brown. In a Lord Mayoral Minute tabled at Monday night's meeting, Cr Brown focused on a shortage of residential aged care in Wollongong.

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Government allocated funding to further the education of aged care workers about dementia care.

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Channel 10, 10 News First, 17/12/2024, Jennifer Keyte

Treasurer Jim Chalmers is managing expectations ahead of tomorrow's mid-year economic update, which will no longer report a budget surplus. There will be \$14.6 billion in savings achieved through aged care co-contributions and defence fund reallocations. Spending will increase by \$16.3 billion for essential services like Medicare, pensions, and childcare, while unavoidable costs add another \$8.8 billion. Labor denies it is specifically directing departments to defer spending so that the deficits look smaller during next year's election campaign.

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

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POPULATION HEALTH

Major fashion trends exposing millions of Aussies to increased risks of skin cancer revealed

The Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Emma Kirk

Dermatologists have warned trendy clothing items worn by millions of Australians during summer provided inadequate protection from the sun's harmful UV rays. Skin specialists claim linen shirts, cotton T-shirts and baseball caps only provided 20 per cent of UVA and UVB protection, which was the equivalent of a SPF five rating.

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How hard is it to access an abortion in NSW? These maps show the 'deserts' for care in the state

The Guardian, Other, 17/12/2024

To better understand where women in New South Wales are most struggling to access abortion, researchers led by the University of Sydney and the data visualisation specialist Ri Liu have mapped access to surgical abortion (a procedure undertaken in a clinical setting) and medication abortion (taking prescribed abortion pills) across the state. The following maps use publicly available directories but it's worth noting that not all abortion services were openly advertised or easy to find, providers can change and that the circumstances under which abortions were provided were not transparent.

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'Forever chemicals' found in Sydney sewage by-products used in food production

ABC Online, Other, 17/12/2024, Joanna Woodburn & Xanthe Gregory

Sydney sewage by-products contaminated with so-called "forever chemicals", have been used to help produce food, the ABC can reveal. For more than 30 years the waste from the city's wastewater treatment plants, known as biosolids, have been sent to central and southern NSW for use as fertiliser to boost crops and grazing pastures for livestock.

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These Aboriginal women are breaking down barriers in health across NSW

National Indigenous Times, Other, 17/12/2024, Dechlan Brennan

Eight Indigenous women from NSW are breaking down barriers in the health and community services sector, having recently graduated with a Diploma of Counselling from TAFE NSW Wetherill Park. [...] It comes as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) highlighted research showing Indigenous health staff are able to build better rapport and earn the trust Indigenous patients which enhances communication, which reduces anxiety and enables better treatment and recovery for patients.

ABC News, News Breakfast, 17/12/2024, Stephanie Ferrier & Emma Rebellato

Interview with Dr Linny Phuong, infectious diseases expert, on news headlines. Phuong explains the health impacts of extreme heat in Australia. She notes that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that extreme heat has accounted for 78% of injury-related hospitalisations over the past decade. She says the heat can worsen chronic diseases, such as heart conditions and kidney disease.

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FIVEAA, Mornings, 17/12/2024, Matthew Pantelis

Interview with Professor Jacquie Bowden, Director of the National Centre for Education and Training at Flinders University, on research on parental attitudes toward supplying alcohol to teenagers. Bowden revealed that 11% of parents admit to providing alcohol unsupervised, while 45% believe other parents were doing the same. She also noted that 40% of parents considered it acceptable for teenagers to start drinking at 17 or younger. She details the health risks of early alcohol consumption on adolescent brain development and advocates for not supplying alcohol to teenagers before they turn 18.

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Taxi drivers, ambos offer researchers possible road map to defy Alzheimer's

The Australian, General News, 18/12/2024, Rhys Blakely, Page 3

Taxi and ambulance drivers are less likely to die of Alzheimer's disease than other workers, a study has found, raising the possibility that navigational skills lead to better brain health. The researchers looked at the causes of death of millions of American adults and how they had spent their working lives.

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Prostate cancer: should you get screened now?

The Australian, General News, 18/12/2024, Steve Robson, Page 7

One of the joys of a 50th birthday is receiving invitations for cancer screening. Women are invited to join the national breast cancer screening program, and both genders receive a letter inviting them to submit a specimen for bowel cancer screening.

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

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Denied access to euthanasia, eight take their own lives

Age, General News, 18/12/2024, Broede Carmody, Page 2

A coroner has asked those scrutinising the state's voluntary assisted dying program to consider the suicide deaths of eight Victorians and possibly a ninth after all were knocked back from accessing the scheme. The move has given hope to some assisted dying advocates, who have for months urged Victoria to follow in the footsteps of the ACT and drop the six-month life-expectancy rule for non-neurodegenerative diseases.

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

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Channel 7, Seven News, 17/12/2024, Susannah Carr & Rick Ardon

More than 1400 desperately ill Australians are currently waiting for a donor kidney, and they make up the vast majority of patients on the nation's organ transplant list. There are so many more that aren't on

the waitlist that need to be worked up.

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FIVEAA, Breakfast, 17/12/2024, Will Goodings & David Penberthy

Scientists from RMIT University have developed a groundbreaking blood test that could revolutionise cancer detection and treatment. The research involved extracting a drop of blood from 15 leukemia patients to assess how nanomedicines can target and kill cancer cells. Study lead Professor David Ju says it shows promise for detecting and treating other solid tumours, such as breast cancer and other bordering cancers.

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PRIMARY CARE

Hospital to consider whistleblower overhaul in light of fraud probe

Age, General News, 18/12/2024, Broede Carmody & Henrietta Cook, Page 5

The Royal Melbourne Hospital will consider stronger whistleblower protections to ensure medical registrars and junior doctors are more likely to come forward if they have witnessed a more senior colleague participating in unethical conduct. The move follows revelations in The Age that Victoria's corruption watchdog is investigating a handful of surgeons working at the Parkville hospital for allegedly billing the Transport Accident Commission for medical procedures that were never carried out on patients and fraudulently claiming assistant surgeon fees.

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

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ALP, Coalition trade barbs in Medicare row

Age, General News, 18/12/2024, Millie Muroi, Page 13

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has accused the Coalition of "coming after Medicare and medicines and pensions", prompting opposition health spokeswoman Anne Ruston to warn that Labor was reviving its discredited 2016 "Mediscare" campaign and telling lies. In a press conference in Canberra yesterday Chalmers clawed into Coalition claims that Labor had "lost control" of spending, which will include \$2.3 billion in additional spending on Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

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

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Stop treating voters like they're stupid

West Australian, Edition Changes, 18/12/2024, Page 2

For the fourth election in a row, Mediscare is back. Inside his series of pre-announcements ahead of what will be a gloomy Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook on Wednesday, Treasurer Jim Chalmers laid a booby trap and waited for an unsuspecting Opposition member to walk into it.

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Greater care is coming to NT

Northern Territory News, General News, 18/12/2024, Gera Kazakov, Page 12

Territorians now have more options to choose from when seeking urgent medical care, thanks to three new urgent care clinics opening in locations from the Top End to the Red Centre. New urgent care clinics are now open in Ali Curung, Lajamanu, and Galiwin'ku, in what federal health and aged care minister Mark Butler called a "game changer".

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#).

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A prescription for timely help

Hobart Mercury, General News, 18/12/2024, Genevieve Holding, Page 16

Pharmacies are preparing for what is the busiest time of the year but are assuring that they have everything Tasmanians need as the first medical port of call. Pharmacist and Department of Health Pharmacy projects director Duncan McKenzie said that while health services may be busy during the festive season, pharmacies will have open doors.

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RFDS fleet to keep flying

Sunraysia Daily, General News, 18/12/2024, April Shepherd, Page 4

Royal Flying Doctor Service South Eastern Section executive general manager of aviation and operations Mark Davey has released a statement assuring locals that it has no imminent plans to upgrade its fleet, and will continue to fly into small airstrips. Concerns were raised in the community following a recent announcement from the New South Wales Regional Development Trust regarding rural and remote airstrip upgrades, with concerns that this choice was related to the RFDS upgrading its fleet to bigger planes that cannot land at small remote airports.

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Treasurer Jim Chalmers claims Coalition 'coming after Medicare, medicines, pensions'

West Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Jackson Hewett

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has used his pre MYEFO press conference to cast the Coalition as a party that will come after "Medicare, medicines and pensions." It sets up an election year where Labor's focus cost-of-living support will be contrasted with more prudent economic management under the Coalition.

[Read More](#)

Push to stop NSW hospitals opting out of abortions as healthcare 'deserts' exposed

The Guardian, Other, 18/12/2024, Melissa Davey, Catie McLeod & Kate Lyons

Public hospitals should not be able to "opt out of" providing abortions, according to the Greens MP Dr Amanda Cohn, who said despite abortion being decriminalised in New South Wales five years ago "far too little has changed". Her comments came in response to data published by Guardian Australia on Tuesday that shows just three public hospitals in the state provide surgical abortion outside of emergencies.

[Read More](#)

NSW abortion deserts: just three of 220 public hospitals provide terminations, research finds

The Guardian, Other, 17/12/2024, Donna Lu, Melissa Davey & Nick Evershed

All 15 health districts and the state's health minister refuse to give public information on access to terminations Just three of New South Wales' 220 public hospitals are routinely providing abortions, according to research by the University of Sydney. The research, which maps lack of access to abortion in the state , also reveals that a majority of the state's cities and towns are "abortion deserts", meaning the nearest service is more than 160km away.

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Sydney braces for heatwave amid warning hospitals may struggle as hot weather hits New South Wales

ABC Online, Other, 17/12/2024, Holly Tregenza

There are warnings patients could face long wait times at emergency departments in Sydney's west today as temperatures reach 40 degrees Celsius and above. Records have already been broken this week in a raft of towns across New South Wales as a heatwave envelops the state.

[Read More](#)

'Significant distress to patients'

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 17/12/2024

Recent supply shortages for first-line migraine meds hit patients hard and increased workloads, according to a PBAC stakeholder meeting. Calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) therapies are recommended as first-line medications for prevention of chronic migraine but patients and health practitioners have been impacted by shortages, according to a stakeholder meeting chaired by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory

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Locumate expands pharmacy workforce platform with Sigma Healthcare and US partnerships

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 17/12/2024

Pharmacy workforce platform, Locumate.ai (Locumate) has signed a major agreement with Sigma Healthcare, adding more than 400 pharmacists to its growing presence in Australia. The announcement coincides with Locumate's expansion into the United States through a joint venture with the Indian Pharmacy Association in California.

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3AW, Drive, 17/12/2024, Jacqui Felgate

The Alfred Hospital is currently experiencing an internal emergency due to a major malfunction in its IT system. All elective surgeries have been cancelled.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Genanxious

Herald Sun, General News, 18/12/2024, Sarah Booth, Page 1

Almost three-quarters of Melbourne teenagers have experienced clinically significant levels of anxiety or depression by the age of 18, new research has found. Most were struggling for long periods of time, with two-thirds of sufferers reporting issues at three different stages during their adolescence.

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Spate of suicides leads to call for overhaul of assisted dying law

Herald Sun, General News, 18/12/2024, Rebekah Cavanagh, Page 12

A coroner has called for a review of the eligibility requirements to access Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) in Victoria after an alarming number of people suffering debilitating diseases took their own lives when being found ineligible. Coroner Simon McGregor has identified eight cases of suicide following refusal of VAD since the assisted dying laws came into force in 2019.

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Emotional support animals play a vital role in many lives

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 18/12/2024, Zoe Wundenberg, Page 14

Must love dogs - the catchcry of the famous movie of the same name - holds particular meaning for a growing portion of our communities across Australia, and yet it is being responded to with a deafening silence. The increasing prevalence of emotional support animals signifies their importance in the lives of many individuals, particularly those living on the autism spectrum and those grappling with mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

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Free mental health support in the northern suburbs

Bunyip, General News, 18/12/2024, Page 3

New and expectant parents in the northern suburbs will get free, personalised support with a new perinatal mental health centre to be established in Elizabeth. [...] "It's common to be overwhelmed and

tired during pregnancy and as a new parent, but many Australians are faced with far greater challengers," Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care Mark Butler said.

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Victorian Coroner Simon McGregor calls for expanded voluntary assisted dying scheme to be reviewed after eight deaths

The Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Duncan Evans

Eight people with declining health took their own lives after being denied access to one state's voluntary assisted dying (VAD) regime – with a coroner suggesting a review of the controversial scheme. Victorian Coroner Simon McGregor suggested more people should be allowed access to the procedure after reviewing the death of Geoffrey McConachy, who took his own life after he was denied access to the procedure.

[Read More](#)

Eight people were denied voluntary assisted dying. Then, they took their own lives

7news.com.au, Other, 17/12/2024, Emily Woods

A coroner has called for improvements to voluntary assisted dying selection criteria, finding eight people took their own lives after being refused access. Eight people with declining health who were denied access to voluntary assisted dying have taken their own lives since the laws came into effect in Victoria, a coroner has found.

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2GB, Afternoons, 17/12/2024, Trevor Long

Interview with Professor Sarahn Lovett, Director, Australasian ADHD Professionals Association, on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Long reports the federal government announced its full support for the development of nationwide ADHD prescribing rules last week, one year after a national inquiry. Lovett says the government's response falls short in addressing the 15 recommendations. She points out the lack of uniformity in ADHD prescribing regulations across states, which complicates access to medication and treatment.

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2GB, Mornings, 17/12/2024, Ray Hadley

Mental Health Australia is calling for greater attention to mental health issues ahead of the federal election, citing a significant gap between the health burden and funding allocated to mental health services. According to the organisation, two-thirds of voters are more likely to support political parties that prioritise mental health funding. Mental health currently accounts for 15% of Australia's health burden, yet only 7% of health funding is directed to the issue.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

No relevant coverage

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

\$50m super pay scandal hits soldiers

The Australian, General News, 18/12/2024, Sarah Elks, Page 1

Thousands of psychologists and mental health social workers providing around-the-clock trauma counselling for Australia's serving soldiers and military veterans have not been paid up to \$50m in

superannuation for 12 years by the federal government, in a major and developing underpayment scandal.

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Surgery pause as nurses strike

Herald Sun, General News, 18/12/2024, Sarah Booth, Page 11

Elective surgery will be suspended for several hours at four local private hospitals on Wednesday as the nurses union ramps up industrial action. Nursing staff at St Vincent's four private hospitals in Melbourne have been locked in industrial action for more than 30 days amid a dispute over their new EBA and staffing levels.

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Still no date for security guard camera trial

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 18/12/2024, Kate McIlwain, Page 4

Hospital security guards on Sydney's North Shore are switching on body-worn cameras designed to stop assaults on staff, but there is still no date for when the cameras will come to the Illawarra. The NSW government announced in July that Wollongong and Shoalhaven hospitals would be among 15 hospitals taking part in the trial.

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Doctors wanted reward offered

Border Mail, General News, 18/12/2024, Beau Greenway, Page 1

Attracting doctors to regional areas has long proved a challenging task. But Beechworth Surgery is thinking outside the box to address its GP shortage.

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Scores of resignations flood in as NSW psychiatrists launch bid to save sick system

The Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Natasha Robinson

Almost one in five psychiatrists employed in NSW public hospitals have tendered their resignations, with more to come, in an extraordinary bid to stem a mutiny of public sector doctors and improve patient care within a mental health system at breaking point. At least 150 staff specialist psychiatrists – well over half the workforce of these public sector doctors – resolved to quit their jobs in an extraordinary meeting convened by the national psychiatry college on Monday night.

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More than 150 NSW psychiatrists threaten to resign over ongoing pay dispute, sparking fears of public health crisis

The Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Duncan Evans

One state's public mental health services could soon tip into crisis, as more than 150 psychiatrists threaten to quit their jobs over a rolling pay and staffing dispute. Doctors with the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation have begun submitting resignations to NSW Health - threatening a mass exodus on January 21 without a new pay deal.

Also reported by: [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

Premier Cook urges nurses to take 12.5 per cent after Australian Nursing Federation called for pay rise

West Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Jessica Page

Premier Roger Cook is urging nurses and midwives to accept a 12.5 per cent pay rise, with voting on the Government's latest offer underway. The Australian Nursing Federation called the boosted offer more serious and said higher base pay will result in an average wage increase of 15 per cent, but the reaction from ANF members has been mixed online.

[Read More](#)

ABC Radio Perth, Statewide Mornings, 17/12/2024, Michelle Stanley

The Australian Nursing Federation has confirmed that the WA government's latest pay offer includes the largest wage increase for nurses in the state's history. The offer, which was received yesterday, includes an 18% wage increase for some staff and an average increase of 15%.

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

The invisible hands

The Nightly, General News, 17/12/2024, Jackson Hewett & Nicola Smith, Page 1

The Coalition has slammed the Treasurer's "addiction to spending" after he accused them of targeting "Medicare, medicines and pensions" in an emerging election showdown over who can best handle the economy. [...] This spending encompasses increased investments in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, aged care, COVID-19 programs and reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

No relevant coverage

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

No relevant coverage

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HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

Calls for limited input on rehab centre

Sunraysia Daily, General News, 18/12/2024, Lewis Nancekivell, Page 2

The Victorian Government is asking the community to have a say in the design of the new \$36 million drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre planned at Merbein. Set for the site of the old Merbein Primary School, the proposed centre would be run in partnership by Sunraysia Community Health Services, Mildura Base Public Hospital, Odyssey House Victoria, and Mallee District Aboriginal Services.

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SPORT

\$3.2 Million Boost for Gender Equality in Sport

Northern Rivers Times, General News, 19/12/2024, Ian Rogers, Page 63

The Australian Government has announced an additional \$3.2 million investment to support women in coaching, officiating, and sports administration. [...] Minister for Sport, the Hon Anika Wells said: "The ASC's WLIS and Women in High Performance Coaching programs are about representation.

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

Creepy-crawly cancer solution

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 18/12/2024, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 5

Queensland scientists have made a groundbreaking discovery into how to treat drug-resistant advanced melanomas and tarantulas have played a critical part. QUT researchers have modified the anti-microbial peptides from the Brazilian tarantula and the Japanese horseshoe crab and found they can kill samples of melanoma cells derived from a cancer model in mice that are resistant to other cancer therapies.

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

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Why you should always take the stairs to live longer

The Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Peta Bee

Exercise will do many things, but will it really help you to live longer? Research by Lennert Veerman, professor of public health at Griffith University's school of medicine and dentistry in Australia, shows that exercise is akin to a longevity jab and that by increasing physical activity, we can add as much as 11 years to our lifespan.

[Read More](#)

4BC, Afternoons, 17/12/2024, Dean Miller

Interview with Associate Professor Sonia Henriques, QUT, on their research into melanoma treatment. Miller says that over 4,180 people are diagnosed with melanoma each year in Queensland. Henriques explains that the treatment uses antimicrobial peptides, which are naturally produced by animals like Brazilian tarantulas and Japanese horseshoe crabs. She notes that while the research is still in its early stages, these peptides show potential in targeting and killing melanoma cells.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Support for Aboriginal nursing and midwife students now available in NSW

National Indigenous Times, Other, 17/12/2024, Joseph Guenzler

Aboriginal nursing and midwifery students can now apply for financial and career support through the NSW Health Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship and Cadetship Program. The program aims to increase the number of Aboriginal nurses and midwives in the public health system while improving career development opportunities.

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INTERIM AUSTRALIAN CDC

Flesh-eating infection may spread

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 18/12/2024, Kate Aubusson, Page 12

A flesh-eating ulcer has taken root in a NSW holiday town and poses a risk of spreading to Sydney. Batemans Bay, on the state's south coast, has become an endemic centre for Buruli ulcer, infectious disease experts have warned, after two confirmed cases were genetically linked to an earlier infection in another NSW town.

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Covid makes comeback

Courier Mail, General News, 18/12/2024, Page 5

Queenslanders are so fed up with almost five years of Covid-19 that uptake of the newest booster shot is poor, contributing to escalating cases in the state. Queensland Health's data shows a steady incline in cases from 1029 in the week starting November 11 to December 2 which recorded 1838 cases.

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Worst disease outbreak in 20 years strikes Australia - what you need to know

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 17/12/2024, Steve Williams

Australian children under the age of two are at risk of contracting pneumococcal disease as the country battles the worst outbreak in 20 years. There have been 4,500 cases of pneumococcal disease including meningitis, septicaemia and pneumonia since the start of 2023 - marking the highest annual rate since 2002.

[Read More](#)

Warning issued as new Covid wave hits Western Australia

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

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.

[Read More](#)

ABC Radio Brisbane, Breakfast, 17/12/2024, Spencer Howson

A health warning has been issued for Brisbane residents after a toddler tested positive for measles. Authorities are urging the public to be aware of symptoms, as the two-year-old visited several public places after flying from Bangkok to Melbourne and arriving at Brisbane's domestic terminal.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Script to preserve HRT

Courier Mail, General News, 18/12/2024, Page 8

A dire shortage of more than 12 different hormone replacement therapy medications has prompted the Therapeutic Goods Administration to advise doctors to limit prescribing them for new patients. The oestrogen and combination oestrogenprogesterone patches help alleviate perimenopause and menopause symptoms such as hot flushes, night sweats, body aches and anxiety.

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

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ABC listen app

ABC Online, Other, 17/12/2024, Rachel Mealey

Australian women continue to endure shortages of hormone replacement patches used to treat the symptoms of menopause. Now, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has advised doctors to limit prescribing the HRT patches to new patients in order to preserve supply for patients who are currently using them.

[Read More](#)

Women describe 'traumatising' experience of trying to find HRT patches amid long-running shortage

ABC Online, Other, 17/12/2024, Stephanie Dalzell

Doctors have been urged to reconsider prescribing new patients crucial hormone replacement therapy amid a severe shortage that is leaving some women in a "constant state" of anxiety. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has advised doctors to limit starting new patients on the patches during the shortage period, saying it "will help preserve available supply for existing patients."

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Pneumococcal outbreak worst in 20 years

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 17/12/2024

Rates of pneumococcal disease – a life-threatening bacterial infection that can attack the lungs, brain and bloodstream – have hit a 20-year high, according to national notifiable disease data. [...] The Immunisation Foundation of Australia is urging the Federal Government to prioritise the rollout of newer, broader-coverage pneumococcal vaccines that have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration and recommended by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation and Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.

[Read More](#)

Sunshine Coast tobacconist fined \$37,560 in illegal vape crackdown

Sunshine Coast Daily, Other, 17/12/2024

A Sunshine Coast tobacconist has been slapped with a massive fine after investigations revealed almost five thousand illegal vapes across multiple businesses. The tobacconist was fined \$37,560 after they were issued infringement notices by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for alleged possession of a commercial quantity of vaping goods.

[Read More](#)

ABC, 7:30, 17/12/2024, Laura Tingle

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is reviewing the safety of BioCeuticals' ArmaForce after hundreds of reports of allergic reactions to its ingredient, *Andrographis paniculata*. Carmen Wells, who took the supplement for flu relief, was diagnosed with drug-induced liver injury and autoimmune hepatitis after tests at Newcastle's John Hunter Hospital. Since 2011, the TGA has received 858 reports of adverse reactions to six ArmaForce products, ranging from hives to life-threatening anaphylaxis. In June, the TGA was informed of the death of a 37-year-old Queensland man allegedly linked to the product.

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

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ABC News, News Breakfast, 17/12/2024, Stephanie Ferrier & Emma Rebellato

Health authorities have advised doctors to limit starting new patients on hormone replacement therapy amid a severe shortage. A dozen different HRT products used to treat a range of menopause symptoms are currently in short supply, with some not expected to return to normal for 12 months. The Therapeutic Goods Administration says managing medicine shortages is a priority for the federal government, and it has approved patches from overseas to help ease supply issues.

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6PR, Mornings, 17/12/2024, Chrissy Morrissey

Interview with Dr Danielle McMullen, President, Australian Medical Association (AMA), on the ongoing shortage of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) patches in Australia. Morrissey reports Australia is experiencing a severe shortage of hormone replacement therapy patches, with the TGA reporting supply constraints are expected to last until the end of next year. McMullen explains that the shortage is due to global supply constraints, including manufacturing delays and logistics issues. She says alternatives like tablets and gels are not as convenient as patches.

Interview continues on: [6PR \(Perth\)](#).

OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

Mam case law reform

Courier Mail, General News, 18/12/2024, Madura McCormack , Page 1

Brisbane Broncos star Ezra Mam's light punishment for drug-driving could spark harsh changes to Queensland's laws. Attorney-General Deb Frecklington says the \$850 fine with no conviction recorded "doesn't pass the pub test".

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Citywide raids net \$2m illicit vape haul

West Australian, General News, 18/12/2024, Katina Curtis, Page 22

More than 60,000 illegal vapes worth almost \$2 million have been seized in raids on convenience stores and other retailers across Perth. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said shop owners were on notice that they must stick to the laws.

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

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'Disgraceful': NRL star's penalty may spark law changes

West Australian, Other, 17/12/2024, Fraser Barton

A backlash over NRL star Ezra Mam's "disgraceful" drug driving penalty has prompted the Queensland government to consider law changes. Brisbane playmaker Mam was told he was lucky no one was killed after his "stupid" decision to drive unlicensed on a cocktail of drugs, including cocaine, ended in a head-on collision.

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FOOD STANDARDS

ABC Radio Sydney, Breakfast, 17/12/2024, Chris Taylor

The NSW food regulator says it will crack down harder on restaurants and eateries that breach the safety and hygiene standards. The plan is to increase the fine from \$880 to \$1980.

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