



TODAY'S NEWS

Friday, 3rd January 2025

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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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Sydney Morning Herald](#) (Page 1) reports that yesterday Health Minister Mark Butler said he had always been clear “fixing the mess we inherited in Medicare” would take more than one term of parliament. “What we’ve already done has made a meaningful difference,” he said. An analysis of Medicare data has revealed a growing number of Australians delay going to the doctor due to the cost.
- The [Australian Financial Review](#) (Page 3) reports that the overhaul of how general practitioners are paid is being considered by Health Minister Mark Butler to better treat complex, ongoing health problems that are not being managed well under Medicare’s universal healthcare model.
- The [Geelong Advertiser](#) (Page 3) reports that Metastatic breast cancer treatment Olaparib (brand name Lynparza) has been added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Without the

subsidy the drug would cost patients \$72,000 per course of treatment, Health and Aged Care Minister Mark Butler said.

- **The Australian** (Page 6) reports that Australia is fast-tracking genomic medicine from research to clinical care, though significant challenges persist. A new organization, Genomics Australia, will manage this project.
- The **Courier Mail** reports that Victoria's first pill-testing trial that took place across the four-day Beyond the Valley festival at Barunah Plains has been deemed a success after the drug-checking service spoke to more than 700 people and tested more than 600 samples.

MINISTER BUTLER

'Shiny diversions' distract from real health necessities

The Australian, General News, 03/01/2025, James Dowling, Page 6

The nation's medical leaders say Labor and the Coalition should make preventing disease the cornerstones of their pre-election health policies instead of trying to boost up "distracting" and "shiny" urgent-care clinics. After Health Minister Mark Butler signalled Labor would be unveiling changes to Medicare and urgent-care clinics in the lead-up to this year's federal poll, the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Consumer Health Forum and Public Health Association of Australia slammed both parties for ignoring their pleas to tackle chronic health issues like diabetes and heart disease.

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

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ALP mulls a 'blended' Medicare

Australian Financial Review, General News, 03/01/2025, Lucy Slade, Page 3

Health Minister Mark Butler is considering overhauling the way GPs are paid to better treat complex, ongoing health problems that are not being managed well under Medicare's universal healthcare model.

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

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Middle Australia stung by rise in medical fees

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 03/01/2025, Natassia Chrysanthos, Page 1

Working Australians are paying more to see a GP than they were a year ago with higher gap fees and fewer fully covered appointments even as the Albanese government pours record levels of funding into encouraging doctors to bulk-bill. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said yesterday he had always been clear "fixing the mess we inherited in Medicare" would take more than one term of parliament.

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Desperate Labor to play Medicare card yet again

Herald Sun, General News, 03/01/2025, James Campbell, Page 21

It says a lot about how little he has to show for his two-and-a-half years in office that Albo is going to try to make this year's election all about Medicare. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler was out on Thursday giving us a taste of the stuff we can expect for the next few months.

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

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Top cancer drugs put on the PBS

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 03/01/2025, Page 3

Drugs used to treat breast and prostate cancer have been added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which the federal government says saves consumers \$1.1bn. Metastatic breast cancer treatment Olaparib (brand name Lynparza) has been added to the scheme, with the listing expected to benefit about 300 patients a year.

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Money for Maffra Men's Shed

Gippsland Times & Maffra Spectator, General News, 02/01/2025, Page 22

The Maffra Men's Shed will receive \$8000 to refurbish its amenities block. [...] Federal Health and Aged Care Minister Mark Butler said Men's Sheds provided an important space for men and boys to find mateship and social support to help them stay mentally and physically healthy.

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Labor to make major Medicare, bulk-billing election pitch

Australian Financial Review, Other, 02/01/2025, Lucy Slade

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is expected to announce a range of new health policies ahead of the federal election, including boosting bulk billing, expanding urgent care clinics and overhauling general practitioner subsidies under Medicare.

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Labor saddles up old warhorse to enter election campaign fray

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 02/01/2025

Medicare, for Labor, is a headland achievement and a useful battering ram come election time. [...] With Labor and the opposition neck and neck in polling, Albanese is likely to use a set-piece speech to reveal the health promises, but that has not stopped Health Minister Mark Butler breathing life into the old monster.

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Healthcare shaping up to be election frontier as Labor, Coalition trade barbs on Medicare

West Australian, Other, 02/01/2025, Ellen Ransley

Healthcare is shaping up to be a major Federal election battlefield, with both the Government and the Coalition beginning the year by trading barbs and accusing the other of having a worse record. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler on Thursday left the door open to announcing further policy measures ahead of the next election – due by May – but would not be drawn on what that might look like.

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More to do on Medicare and bulk-billing, Labor says

Canberra Times, Other, 02/01/2025, Poppy Johnston

Making it cheaper to see a doctor is expected to feature prominently in Labor's election pitch, with the federal health minister committed to strengthening Medicare before the upcoming campaign. "There's more we want to do to deliver - more doctors, more bulk-billing and more urgent care," Health Minister Mark Butler told reporters in Adelaide on Thursday.

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ABC, ABC News, 02/01/2025, Tamara Oudyn

Nearly 500 Australians with breast or prostate cancer will benefit from new treatments being added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Talzenna will be listed in combination with another drug to treat patients with metastatic prostate cancer. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler believes this will bring affordable access to around 300 patients every single year for those who have this type of breast cancer, who would otherwise need to pay \$72,000 per course.

Similar content in: [Channel 7 \(Sydney\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Sydney\)](#).

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Channel 7, Seven News, 02/01/2025, Mike Smithson

Labor has promised today to cut the cost of cancer drugs like Lynparza and attacked Opposition leader Peter Dutton's health record. Health Minister Mark Butler mentions that this move will give Australian

patients affordable access to some of the best cutting-edge treatments available on the planet.

Similar content in: [SBS \(Sydney\)](#), [ABC \(Sydney\)](#).

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ABC News, Mornings, 02/01/2025, Chris Mitchell

Hundreds of Australians with breast and prostate cancer will benefit from new treatments being added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. Health Minister Mark Butler says it will be life changing for patients.

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ABC Radio Sydney, 20:00 News, 02/01/2025

Health Minister Mark Butler says the Federal Government is looking at what it can do to increase bulk billing rates and urgent care options but has stopped short of confirming reports of how it may do that. He has long supported the latter option and says it has the backing of the Australian Medical Association.

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MINISTER WELLS

Channel 7, Sunrise 5AM News, 02/01/2025, Teegan Dolling

Bosses who deliberately underpay workers can now be jailed. Tough new laws are now in effect, with employers facing lengthy prison terms and multi-million-dollar fines if they are caught shortchanging their staff. Anika Wells, Federal MP, says there will be actual consequences for people particularly employers who set out to do the wrong thing.

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Channel 9, Nine News, 01/01/2025, Tracy Vo

The Federal Opposition is claiming victory in a war with Woolworths over Australia Day celebrations. The supermarket giant pulled merchandise from shelves last year, but tonight a backdown of sorts. Anika Wells, Government Minister, says its entirely up to retailers on what they'd like to sell for people and people have the right to choose how they celebrate Australia Day.

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i98 FM, 06:00 News, 02/01/2025

Aged Care Minister Anika Wells says a pay rise, which came into effect for workers overnight will help future proof the industry. 340,000 aged care staff are seeing their wages lift by up to 13.5% under the changes.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

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DEPARTMENT

How to live your best life for longer

The Australian, General News, 03/01/2025, Stephen Lunn, Page 10

Wish as we might, there's no shortcut to ageing well. It requires action, effort, persistence and positivity. [...] The Department of Health and Aged Care guidelines are relatively onerous, and are currently under review.

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Changes kick in

Riverine Herald, General News, 03/01/2025, Ryan Bellingham, Page 2

New property levies, increases to welfare payments, salary and wage changes, free TAFE courses are among changes that kicked in on January 1. [...] For others, the extended safety net rose from \$2544.30 to \$2615.50, according to the Department of Health and Aged Care.

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Parenting is a mix of emotions, now with expert advice

South Burnett Today, General News, 02/01/2025, Page 14

The key to giving babies the best start in life is staying connected in community, and strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of new parents and carers. [...] Delivery of the Triple P Positive Parenting Program to parents and carers of children in Australia is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care under the Parenting Education and Support Program.

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VACCINES

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

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POPULATION HEALTH

JE case prompts mozzie warning

Sunraysia Daily, General News, 03/01/2025, Allan Murphy, Page 6

Residents and visitors in northern Victoria have been urged to take measures to avoid mosquito bites following the first identified case of Japanese encephalitis (JE) in the state this mosquito season. The

probable case of JE virus infection, as well as detections through environmental surveillance, indicate that the JE virus is likely circulating in northern Victoria this summer, according to health authorities.

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A single cigarette slashes 20 minutes off your life expectancy, research suggests

9News, Other, 02/01/2025

Obesity overtakes tobacco as health risk, new study shows If you're thinking about making a New Year's resolution to quit smoking, it might help to know that new research says it could extend your life expectancy. Each cigarette someone smokes, on average, can take about 20 minutes off their life expectancy overall, according to new research based on British smokers.

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

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Geelong Advertiser, General News, 03/01/2025, Page 3

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Also reported by: [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Gold Coast\)](#).

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Eight things a dermatologist wants you to know about skin cancer

The Australian, Other, 02/01/2025, Ritu Gupta

Australia is, unfortunately, the world leader in skin cancer of all types, and particularly the most deadly form of skin cancer, melanoma. Melanoma is estimated to be the 11th most common cancer in Australia, causing up to five deaths every day.

[Read More](#)

Sky News Live, News Night, 02/01/2025, Rhiannon Elston

Australians with breast and prostate cancer will now have better and cheaper access to life saving treatment. A new PBS listing has now been expanded by the government, helping hundreds of patients every year at eight months pregnant.

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PRIMARY CARE

'Shiny diversions' distract from real health necessities

The Australian, General News, 03/01/2025, James Dowling, Page 6

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Helicopter joins the fleet

Border Watch, General News, 03/01/2025, Page 6

An additional helicopter has joined the state's emergency aerial fleet, providing a boost in response times and operational capacity to help South Australians in need. The Bell 412 EP helicopter part of a \$150 million state government commitment to bolster emergency helicopter services is the third helicopter now available to SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) for critical emergency response.

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Pharmacist app Locumate signs deal with Amcal owner Sigma

The Australian, Other, 02/01/2025, Jared Lynch

A Melbourne start-up that says it has saved pharmacists about \$2.5m in locum agency fees has signed up Australia's biggest chemist group, ASX-listed Sigma, as it expands to the US and into other health professions. Kavita Nadan co-founded Locumate.ai at her kitchen table four years ago after struggling to find a locum at her own pharmacy.

[Read More](#)

Labor to focus on Medicare for the upcoming federal election

The Australian, Other, 02/01/2025

The Labor Party will reportedly put Medicare at the centre of its re-election campaign. According to The Age, increases in bulk billing, the GP workforce and urgent-care clinics are expected to be key pillars of Anthony Albanese's pitch to voters.

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

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2CC, Canberra Live, 02/01/2025, Leon Delaney

Interview with Dr Michael Wright, President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, about the plans to better incentivise GPs through bulk billing. Wright says he welcomes the move that the government is considering, particularly in adding investment in general practice, because they know that Medicare rebates haven't kept up with inflation.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Mark Colin Morrell, 59, fined \$1000 for threatening first responders and medical staff at Cairns Hospital

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 02/01/2025, Marnie Buchanan

First responders and Cairns Hospital nurses and doctors were abused and threatened with being "lit up like a Christmas tree", a Cairns court has been told. A man who abused and threatened first responders and medical professionals who came to his aid after a fight has been fined \$1000 in Cairns Magistrates Court.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#)

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

3AW, Breakfast, 02/01/2025, Ross Stevenson & Russel Howcroft

Interview with Dr Mary-Anne Lancaster, Melbourne GP. Compere mentions that almost 10% of Australia's GPs are aged over 70 with new figures have revealed, with concerns that a proposal to introduce health cheques for older doctors may worsen workforce shortages. Lancaster points out that he has seen lots of GPs being sued during his time of being a GP, but not one family GP has received any so far. Compere says there have been people looking into health checks, according to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Agency.

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SPORT

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

Vital momentum for a crucial branch of medical science

The Australian, General News, 03/01/2025, Natasha Robinson, Page 6

The first steps have been taken since The Australian launched its series on genomics Australia's implementation of genomic medicine from the realms of research to diagnosis and clinical care for patients is beginning to be fast-tracked, but big challenges remain. Co-ordination of this large project will be managed by a new body known as Genomics Australia, and the good news is this entity's establishment and initial funding has been secured prior to the election, which is due in the first half of 2025.

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

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

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INTERIM AUSTRALIAN CDC

Hazmat alert issued for chemical spill in South Perth with residents told to stay indoors

West Australian, Other, 02/01/2025, Jake Dietsch

A chemical spill in South Perth emitting potentially harmful fumes, has prompted a warning to avoid the area. The Hazmat alert, issued by Department of Fire and Emergency Services on Thursday afternoon, says "unknown chemicals" have been spilled at the back of a commercial complex between Mill Point Road and Canning Highway, opposite Gwentyfred Road.

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ABC News, News Breakfast, 02/01/2025, Emma Rebellato & Stephanie March

Interview with Dr Julian Rait, Vice President, AMA. Compere points out that doctors are alarmed of the continued rise in whopping cough cases across Australia after cases last year hit levels not seen in decades. Rait says they usually see spikes on whopping cough cases every 4 to 5 years and the most recent spike should have occurred in about 2021 and 2022, but because of the COVID situation and social distancing and masks, they didn't see any.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Aussie nurse explains why your sunscreen isn't really working

The Courier Mail, Other, 02/01/2025, Cassidy Pearce

It's no secret that some sunscreens are better than others. But, what if the sunscreen you're using isn't a sunscreen at all? [...] "Go onto the ARTG, which is the TGA's Therapeutic Goods database, and search for the brand name or the product name," Dr Jess recommended in the video.

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

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Channel 9, Nine News, 02/01/2025, Tracy Vo

An overhaul of Medicare could be on the way after Labor moves to make it cheaper to see a GP. It comes as the Federal Government looks to introduce a new health policy to take to the election to aim at the Opposition leader Peter Dutton's records.

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OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

State government says pill-testing trial at Beyond the Valley music festival was a success

The Courier Mail, Other, 02/01/2025, Will Keech

The state government has deemed Victoria's first pill-testing trial a success, after testing more than 600 samples at a popular New Year's music festival outside Geelong. Victoria's first pill-testing trial – at a

New Year's music festival outside Geelong – was a success, according to the state government after hundreds of samples were tested at the event.

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

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Pill-testing thumbs up at Field Day music festival at The Domain

Toowoomba Chronicle, Other, 02/01/2025, Jack Crawley

As music fans rang in 2025 with Field Day in The Domain, festival-goers told The Telegraph what they thought of the government's 12-month pill-testing trial. Sydney festival lovers were ringing in 2025 in style on Wednesday, dancing away the first calendar day as Field Day kicked off at The Domain.

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

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