



Australian Government  
Department of Health  
and Aged Care

# TODAY'S NEWS

Friday, 10th January 2025

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Canberra Times](#) (page 1) reports that the Department of Health and Aged Care has revealed it made a total of \$736,126 in discretionary incentive-to-retire payments to five senior officials last financial year.
- The [Courier Mail](#) (page 1) reports that peak bodies are urging Queensland councils and the Crisafulli government to reject anti-fluoridation lobbyists and conspiracy theorists, as child dental health in the nation's least-fluoridated state rapidly falls behind. *Also reported by:* [Cairns Post](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin](#), [Townsville Bulletin](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle](#), [Daily Mercury](#).
- The [Hobart Mercury](#) (page 3) reports that Tasmanian Department of Health secretary Dale Webster has apologized to mothers receiving substandard maternity care at Royal Hobart Hospital after the release of a scathing departmental review.
- [The Australian](#) (page 3) reports that Tennis Australia has signed a five-year contract for digital child offender screening technology to provide ongoing checks on staff, officials and coaches at all levels of the sport.

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

News Of The Area, Other, 09/01/2025, 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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## MINISTER WELLS

### Money or the starter's gun? AFL and NRL riches remain a lure for Olympic hopefuls

The Guardian, Other, 10/01/2025, Nicole Jeffery

[...] While athletics, and other Olympic sports, have much to offer, they cannot compete with the financial largesse major football codes shower on young athletes. However, in November, Federal Sports Minister Anika Wells announced a record \$385m investment package in Olympic and Paralympic sport over the next 18 months – boosting funding by an average 64% a year – to invest more in development pathways.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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## DEPARTMENT

### The secret millions for payouts to senior staff

Canberra Times, General News, 10/01/2025, Miriam Webber, Page 1

Services Australia paid \$1.5 million to senior public servants to encourage them to move on in the last financial year, in an opaque practice used often across the public service. Agency heads in the Australian Public Service are empowered to offer incentive-to-retire payments at their own discretion, when they judge a senior official is "excess to requirements" or no longer has the skills required to perform their role.

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## Where's our urgent care clinics?

Western Advocate, General News, 10/01/2025, Bradley Jurd, Page 5

Battling a severe shortage of GPs and with emergency department waiting rooms suffering under the weight of demand, western NSW remains one of the few regions anywhere in the state without an urgent care clinic. [...] When contacted by ACM, the Federal Government's Department of Health and Age Care department explained states and territories were invited to submit proposals for clinics, with locations decided by what they deem fair distribution, need, demand, suitability and workforce capacity and capability.

Also reported by: [Central Western Daily \(Orange\)](#), [Daily Liberal \(Dubbo\)](#).

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## Guild deal mitigates closures

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 09/01/2025

New figures from the Department of Health and Ageing show that 22 pharmacies across the country closed during the eight months since the Federal Government's 60-day double dispensing policy took effect. The department fielded a total of 165 applications during that time to open new pharmacies, 87 of which it approved.

[Read More](#)

## ABC Radio Brisbane, Breakfast, 09/01/2025, Joel Spreadborough

Interview with Sporting Wheelies wheelchair cricket coach Grant Cunningham. Compere says research from the federal Department of Health and Aged Care shows around 90 per cent of Australian adults participate in some form of sport at least once a year.

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## VACCINES

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## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### Detection of rare disease

Northern Daily Leader, General News, 10/01/2025, Jonathan Hawes, Page 1

An aged care resident has died and another is in hospital after two cases of a rare disease were confirmed at a residential care facility in Gunnedah. One resident in their 80s died in Gunnedah Hospital and the second, also in their 80s, is being treated by hospital physicians.

Also reported by: [Northern Daily Leader \(Online\)](#).

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### Facilities expand elderly capacity

Daily Mercury, General News, 10/01/2025, Fergus Gregg, Page 8

Two aged care facilities are expanding to meet the Mackay region's growing elderly population and housing needs. Ozcare Sarina and the Nanyima Aged Care Community in Mirani are increasing care capacity.

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## 3AW, Mornings, 09/01/2025, Tony Jones

Interview with Florey Institute researcher Professor Colin Masters about a new digital health tool that could soon help predict the onset of Alzheimer's disease in older adults. Masters says the tool will use

artificial intelligence and a sophisticated cognitive test to predict when a person will develop general dementia. He says people who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease using the tool are encouraged to help them convince the federal government to approve new therapies that can slow down the course of the disease.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

### Kick in teeth as lies bite

Courier Mail, General News, 10/01/2025, Jackie Sinnerton, Fergus Gregg and Carlie Walker, Page 1

Alarmed dentists say more children than ever are being anaesthetised to remove rotten teeth – in some cases, every tooth in their mouth – with Queenslanders being hospitalised with preventable dental diseases at a higher rate than the national average. And children are not going to school due to agonising toothaches and oral infections, experts say, as they beg councils to trust science above conspiracy theorists and put fluoride in water supplies – or for the Queensland government to mandate it again.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Gold Coast\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Townsville\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#), [Daily Mercury \(Mackay\)](#).

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### Regional children paying price for this political football

Courier Mail, General News, 10/01/2025, Cr Anna Middleton, Page 4

Recently, in my role as a Cairns councillor, I spoke strongly and voted against a motion that Cairns Regional Council would not add fluoride to its water. I am bewildered that fluoridation has become such a politicised issue when more than 150 major health organisations worldwide endorse the evidence and support supplementing water supplies with fluoride as a safe, efficient and cost-effective public health measure to improve oral health in communities.

Also reported by: [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#), [Daily Mercury \(Mackay\)](#).

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### This can help every child

Courier Mail, General News, 10/01/2025, Samuel Davis, Page 4

Ask Cairns mum Laura Thorpe why her city's water supply should be fluoridated and she will point to the silver cap on five-year-old son Hamish's back molar as evidence. "We call it his Iron Man tooth to try and make it something positive," the Earlville resident says.

Also reported by: [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Gold Coast\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Townsville\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#), [Daily Mercury \(Mackay\)](#).

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### LNP has a policy cavity on fluoride

Courier Mail, General News, 10/01/2025, Jackie Sinnerton and Jill Poulsen, Page 5

The Queensland government won't commit to adding fluoride to town water supplies despite Health Minister Tim Nicholls once proclaiming it was "possibly the last single remaining medical initiative in Queensland to ensure good health for all of us". Neither Mr Nicholls nor Premier David Crisafulli responded directly to questions about whether they still support fluoridation as a vital public health measure, or if they would consider a mandate.

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

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### How 'varnish' is now key part of state government's strategy

Courier Mail, General News, 10/01/2025, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 5

Queensland Health is planning to introduce fluoride varnish to those living in areas without water fluoridation as part of the government's strategy to improve oral health. The varnish would be added to

the teeth by a dentist or health practitioner and it is suitable for adults and children.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Gold Coast\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Townsville\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#), [Daily Mercury \(Mackay\)](#).

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## Time to change this state of decay

Courier Mail, Editorials, 10/01/2025, Page 22

Queensland is being held to ransom by a vocal few who refuse to believe the science that proves water fluoridation improves health outcomes and have somehow convinced more than a few of our elected officials to buckle to their tinfoil threats. State Health Minister Tim Nicholls was right in 2008, when he told parliament that fluoride is: "Possibly the last single remaining medical initiative in Queensland to ensure good health for all of us."

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

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## Issue rotting our community

Cairns Post, General News, 10/01/2025, Editorial, Page 34

Queenslanders should not be hospitalised with preventable dental diseases at a higher rate than the national average. Cairns residents should not have a significantly higher rate of tooth decay (57 per cent) compared to Townsville (47 per cent).

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## Tooth truth

Daily Mercury, General News, 10/01/2025, Editorial, Page 16

Queensland is lagging behind the rest of Australia when it comes to having access to fluoridated water, and none is available in the Mackay-Whitsundays. This needlessly condemns kids to worse dental outcomes, and means families end up spending thousands of dollars more to repair preventable issues.

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## Kids' sunburn cases worst in decades

West Australian, General News, 10/01/2025, Bethany Hiatt, Page 18

A fun day in the sun turned into an agonising ordeal for 12-year-old Clare Nicholson, who was left so blistered by severe sunburn that she required treatment in hospital. An alarming rise in cases such as Clare's prompted Perth Children's Hospital clinical nurse consultant for burns Tania McWilliams to issue a stark warning to parents to make sure their children covered up.

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## Vaping efforts needed beyond the school gates

Medical Forum, General News, 01/01/2025, Dr Jonine Jancey and Dr Renee Carey, Page 22

The Federal Government recently announced the nationwide rollout of a school-based vaping prevention initiative, OurFutures, which aims to curb youth vaping. Developed by experts at the University of Sydney's Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, this program combines input from educators and students to deliver evidence-based prevention strategies.

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## How building a community has been helping Mick to navigate the challenges of homelessness

ABC Online, Other, 09/01/2025, Harvey Biggs

"Once you hit rock bottom there's only really one way to go, isn't there?", Mick says with a widening grin. The father-of-two has been homeless for the past four years, after his almost 20-year marriage broke down. [...] Data released from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare last month shows Queensland and Western Australia had a 44 per cent spike in persistent homelessness over the last five years — the highest in the country.

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## Too sluggish to exercise? Your diet could help

The Australian, Other, 09/01/2025, Penny Timms

What we eat and drink, and how much, plays a significant role in our health and wellbeing, not just now but also for our future selves, and provides us with the energy and nutrients our bodies need to heal and grow. [...] According to the latest data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which provides dietary guidelines, dietary risk factors were the third leading preventable cause of ill health and premature deaths.

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## Dangerous traces of meth could be lurking in second-hand cars across Australia, research finds

9News, Other, 09/01/2025, April Glover

Researchers at Flinders University in Melbourne conducted tests on cars and found most surfaces inside a car retain traces of the illicit substance after it's been smoked. Testing of two cars found meth in 85 per cent of surface wipe examples and 93 per cent of bulk material examples after simulated smoking. [...] In 2022-23, 1 per cent of people in Australia aged over 14 had recently consumed methamphetamine and amphetamine, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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## CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

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## PRIMARY CARE

### Birthing service apology

Hobart Mercury, General News, 10/01/2025, Simon McGuire, Page 3

Department of Health Secretary Dale Webster has apologised to mothers who had negative birthing experiences while using maternity services at the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH). His comments come after a review of the RHH's maternity services found that staffing issues and shortages have plagued the quality of care new mothers receive, among other identified problems.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), Similar coverage: [ABC Online \(Online\)](#), [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#)

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### Tenders open for SA's fourth 24-hour pharmacy

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 09/01/2025

A fourth 24-hour pharmacy in South Australia is a step closer to reality, with the State Government opening submissions of interest to community pharmacies in Adelaide's outer southern suburbs. First announced in Nov last year (PD 05 Nov 2024), the move is set to provide South Australians with even more access to round-the-clock healthcare, with timely medicines and advice available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including public holidays.

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### Channel 9 Darwin, Nine News, 09/01/2025, Paul Murphy

A new storm is brewing tonight over the bungled rollout of medical data software in Top End hospitals, startling claims of senior doctors threatening to resign if the Acacia system is implemented in its current form.

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## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

### Misdiagnosed, Richard spent months in a psychiatric ward. He just needed to tell his story

SBS, Other, 09/01/2025, Charlie Bell and Peggy Giakoumelos

Australians who have had their mental health conditions misdiagnosed say that the standard procedure for diagnosis has limitations and that building rapport with trusted psychologists leads to better outcomes. Richard Hendrie, a social worker and mental health advocate from Albury in NSW, has a history of diagnosis and misdiagnosis for his mental health conditions reaching back 20 years.

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### Sunshine Coast dad's death sparks calls for better mental health support

Sunshine Coast Daily, Other, 09/01/2025, Chloe Grimshaw

The tragic death of a Sunshine Coast dad-of-three on Christmas Day has renewed calls for better regional mental health services. Sunshine Coast father Sam Platt died by suicide on Christmas Day 2024, leaving behind his partner and three young children Alaina, Kayden and Riley.

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### ABC Radio Sydney, Drive, 09/01/2025, Kathryn Robinson

Interview with forensic psychiatrist Ian Korbelt regarding the imminent resignation of some 200 staff psychiatrists from the NSW health system in an industrial standoff with the state government.

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## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Health district acts to fix security

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 10/01/2025, Kate McIlwain, Page 5

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District says it is in discussions with the nurse affected by a tyre-slashing incident which happened over Christmas and revealed a security camera bungle at Shellharbour Hospital. NSW Nurses and Midwives Association member Julie Norris spoke out after her car was targeted by a tyre slasher overnight on Christmas Eve while she was parked outside the hospital.

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### Helping to ease burden of shortages at hospital

Bendigo Advertiser, General News, 10/01/2025, Brodie Everist, Page 1

Forty new doctors starting internships at Bendigo Health will help ease a hiring shortage that has made it difficult to fill positions. Supervisor of intern training Dr Hannah Brownstein said the 12-month internship would be a "springboard" for their future careers.

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## Central Queensland welcomes new generation of doctors

Morning Bulletin, Other, 09/01/2025, Phil Buckman

The Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service has welcomed a group of new graduate doctors for a two-year internship. After their two-week orientation, the interns will complete a rotation at various departments and hospitals in Central Queensland, including placements in Gladstone, Yeppoon, Emerald, Rockhampton and Theodore.

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## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

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## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

### Users appy with changes to My Health application

Northern Territory News, General News, 10/01/2025, Thomas McLean, Page 14

Territorians will now have easier access to their prescriptions and health from wherever they are, following the addition of a number of new features to the My Health app. Australia's Digital Health Agency announced on Tuesday a number of new features to its My Health app, aimed at ending the inconvenience and cost of misplacing paper prescriptions.

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

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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### 'Risk to public health': Unregistered doctor convicted of botched boob job death delivered major ban

NEWS.com.au, Other, 09/01/2025, Steven Zemek and Clareese Packer

An unregistered doctor convicted of manslaughter after a patient died in a botched breast augmentation procedure has been permanently banned from providing health services over public health and safety concerns. Jie Shao, 40, was last year found guilty of manslaughter over the death of Sydney beauty clinic manager Jean Huang.

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### Slip, slop, slap to soothe a \$2 billion problem

Medical Forum, General News, 01/01/2025, Cathy O'Leary

West Australians love the great outdoors, but a new campaign backed by a confronting documentary film has a clear warning for sun-lovers and doctors. Australia might be credited for inventing the cardiac pacemaker and the cochlear implant, but its reputation for being a trailblazer is also extending to a darker side of health care.

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## SPORT

### Tennis Australia acts to keep sex predators at bay

The Australian, General News, 10/01/2025, Brendan Kearns, Page 3

Tennis Australia is cracking down on compliance checks on employees and volunteers in the wake of the child sex abuse royal commission by using digital screening technology designed to detect offenders. The company Oho offers technology that provides ongoing checks on staff, including coaches and officials, which aims to help protect children and young people in Australian sport.

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

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### Feud deepens over China drug scandal

The Australian, Sport, 10/01/2025, Julian Linden, Page 23

The simmering feud between the United States and the World Anti-Doping Agency over the secret Chinese swimming scandal has reached boiling point. In a major escalation overnight, WADA confirmed it had banned American representatives from sitting on its foundation board or executive committee after the US government defaulted on its annual payment to the global drugs watchdog.

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

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### Have your say on our Games

Courier Mail, General News, 10/01/2025, Jen Williams, Page 23

Queenslanders have until midnight tonight to have their say on infrastructure and planning for the Brisbane 2032 Games – and I am hoping that many individuals, organisations and institutions will take the opportunity to do so. Unlike previous strategies and reviews, the terms of reference for the current 100-Day Review have not explicitly ruled anything out.

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

### Funding boost for medical research

Medical Forum, General News, 01/01/2025, Page 4

The Hospital Research Foundation Group has welcomed a new partnership with the State Government which will provide \$3.5 million for medical research in WA. Minister for Medical Research Stephen Dawson announced the agreement at THRF Group's annual awards dinner in November, which will see the Government's Future Health Research and Innovation Fund match the research group's \$1.75 million investment.

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### French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi will look at new opportunities to invest in Australia when they arise

The Australian, Other, 09/01/2025, Chris Herde

One of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies will consider any opportunity to expand its operations in Australia, where it has almost 60 clinical studies under way – the most in any country outside the US. Paul Hudson, chief executive of French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi, said the company had a \$200m-plus investment in the Translational Science Hub in Brisbane, and was attracted by Australia's world-class science and academic research sectors.

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### Aussie study illuminates the huge cardiac risk that follows kidney

## failure

Australian Doctor, Other, 09/01/2025, Rada Rouse

Patients with kidney failure and comorbid insulin-treated diabetes are 65 times more likely than adults in the general population to need major cardiac surgery, research shows. The first population-based Australian study of its kind has quantified the huge excess cardiac risk faced by patients being treated for kidney failure, especially those with diabetes.

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## Iron injection trial

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 09/01/2025

A major iron trial has shown, for the first time, that a single iron infusion in late pregnancy can significantly boost iron stores in pregnant women, outperforming the efficacy of iron tablets. Co-led by the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research in Victoria, the study found that women receiving infusions had a lower anaemia prevalence (46).

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### ACCHOs to lead the way in delivering safe healthcare for Aboriginal children in care

National Indigenous Times, Other, 09/01/2025, Dechlan Brennan

New programs to support Aboriginal health organisations' provision of culturally safe healthcare to Indigenous children living in care have been announced by the Victorian government. \$5.2 million has been earmarked for three new Aboriginal-led pilot programs to be rolled out by ACCHOs (Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisations) from February 2025, with the government noting they were about empowering Indigenous-led teams to provide and coordinate healthcare for children in a culturally safe way.

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## INTERIM AUSTRALIAN CDC

### Japanese encephalitis detection at Moree

Northern Daily Leader, General News, 10/01/2025, Emma Downey, Page 2

The rare but serious illness spread by mosquitos, Japanese encephalitis (JE), has been detected in mosquitos in the North West, and health authorities are encouraging people to get vaccinated. NSW Health's executive director of health protection, Dr Jeremy McAnulty, on Tuesday reported the virus had been detected in mosquitos in the Moree area.

Also reported by: [Northern Daily Leader \(Online\)](#).

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### Mosquito bite leaves Victorian man 'fighting for his life' with Japanese encephalitis

SBS, Other, 09/01/2025, Emma Brancatisano

A Victorian man is hospitalised in critical condition with what is believed to be one of the country's first cases of Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) since 2022. Stephen Bond told his wife he was experiencing headaches and a fever in early December, a GoFundMe page set up on behalf of his family says.

Also reported by: [9News \(Online\)](#), [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#).

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## It's killed birds, people and Australia is bracing for an outbreak. Could H5N1 get here?

SBS, Other, 09/01/2025, Cameron Carr

An elderly man this week become the first person in the United States to die of avian influenza, a highly contagious virus that can cause severe symptoms and sudden death in domestic birds and a variety of other animals, from sea lions to dairy cows. The patient, who was over 65 and had underlying medical conditions, was hospitalised with the H5N1 strain of the virus in December after exposure to a combination of backyard chickens and wild birds, health officials from the state of Louisiana said on Tuesday.

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## China discovers cluster of new mpox strain

Yahoo! News Australia, Other, 09/01/2025, Farah Master and Tom Hogue

Chinese health authorities said on Thursday they had detected the new mutated mpox strain clade 1b as the viral infection spreads to more countries after the World Health Organization declared a global public health emergency last year. China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention said it had found a cluster outbreak of the 1b subclade that started with the infection a foreigner who has a history of travel and residence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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## FIVEAA, Mornings, 09/01/2025, Matthew Pantelis

Interview with World Health Organization spokesperson Dr Margaret Harris regarding the current winter outbreak of HMPV in China.

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## ABC Radio Brisbane, Mornings, 09/01/2025, Cathie Schnitzerling

Interview with Mater Health Services director of infectious diseases Dr Paul Griffin about the possibility of the Black Death resurfacing and reaching Queensland.

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## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### Dob in anyone selling illicit tobacco, vapes

Border Watch, General News, 10/01/2025, Page 6

The state government is encouraging South Australians to report stores selling illicit tobacco and vapes to Consumer and Business Services (CBS). [...] The state government invested \$16 million in a dedicated taskforce within CBS to tackle this illicit trade from July 1 and CBS has been working closely with SAPOL's Operation Eclipse as well as Border Force and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to get these illicit products off South Australian streets.

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### New strategies for melanoma

Medical Forum, General News, 01/01/2025, Dr Helena Collgros and A/Prof Tony Caccetta, Page 18

The Australasian Melanoma Conference which took place in Sydney recently brought together specialists in the field of melanoma, including dermatologists, oncologists, surgeons, radiation oncologists, pathologists, skin cancer GPs and researchers. [...] Although AI is already integrated into certain photography machines, it is not approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration and is currently limited to research (in silico and real world) applications.

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## Meth traces found in cars

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 10/01/2025, Page 19

Flinders University environmental health experts have found most surfaces in a car retain traces of methamphetamine after it's been smoked in the vehicle, putting subsequent users of the vehicles at risk of thirdhand exposure to the drug. Small-scale testing of two vehicles, under special licence and controlled conditions, found meth in 85 per cent of surface wipe samples and 93 per cent of bulk material samples after simulated smoking events.

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Darwin\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#).

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