



Australian Government  
Department of Health  
and Aged Care

# TODAY'S NEWS

Thursday, 23rd January 2025

[Minister Butler](#) | [Minister Wells](#) | [Assistant Minister McBride](#)  
| [Assistant Minister Kearney](#) | [Assistant Minister Thwaites](#) | [Department](#)  
| [Vaccines](#) | [Ageing and Aged Care](#) | [Population Health](#)  
| [Cancer, Hearing and Chronic Conditions](#) | [Primary Care](#)  
| [Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#) | [Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office](#)  
| [Health Workforce](#) | [Technology Assessment and Access](#)  
| [Medicare Benefits and Digital Health](#) | [Benefits Integrity](#)  
| [Health Systems Strategies](#) | [Sport](#) | [Health Economics and Research](#) |  
[First Nations Health](#) | [Interim Australian CDC](#) | [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#)  
| [Office of Drug Control](#) | [Food Standards](#) | [AICIS](#)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Southern Highlands Express](#)** (page 1) reports a carer has been charged with multiple counts of fraud relating to an 89-year-old nursing home resident, as the Australian Human Rights Commission notes financial elder abuse is the third most common form of elder abuse behind psychological abuse and neglect.
- **[The Sydney Morning Herald](#)** (online) reports the Water Services Association of Australia is calling for the entire family of per- and polyfluoralkyl chemicals to be banned in Australian consumer goods, telling a senate inquiry that it was necessary for public health and to avoid the cost of treating contaminated drinking water.
- **[The Australian](#)** (online) reports the World Health Organisation reports alcohol caused 2.6 million deaths in 2019, accounting for 4.7 per cent of all fatalities, while the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated there were 1,667 alcohol-related deaths nationwide in 2023, with 31 per cent of the adult population engaging in "risk-level" drinking.
- **[7 Rockhampton](#)** reports the Albanese government is rolling out 61 walk-in mental health centres around the country, with venues in Rockhampton and Gladstone the latest to open, as Assistant Minister for Mental Health, Emma McBride, notes the centres are breaking down barriers to care.

- **The ABC** (online) reports Australia is 2,400 doctors short of requirements as regional and remote towns engage in a bidding war for GPs, with Health Minister Mark Butler saying the federal government is committed to having small towns retain access to primary healthcare, though the Department of Health predicts the shortfall for GPs will increase to 8,900 by 2048.
- **The Daily Mail** (online) reports the World Cancer Research Fund says a combination of maintaining a slim waist and regularly exercising is the most effective at reducing the risk of cancer, with a study of 315,000 British people finding not keeping to either guideline increased the risk of cancer by 15 per cent.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### GP shortage contributing to 'bidding war' as regional towns struggle to attract doctors

ABC Online, Other, 22/01/2025

A "bidding war" is brewing in Australia's regional and remote towns as the country wrestles with a worsening doctor shortage. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said the federal government was determined to avoid a situation where smaller towns lost the little access they had to primary healthcare.

[Read More](#)

### ABC, 7:30, 22/01/2025, Laura Tingle

A bidding war is brewing in Australia's rural and remote towns as as they try to minimise the worsening doctor shortage. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says there are more GPs in training than ever in Australia's history.

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### ABC News, Mornings, 22/01/2025, Chris Mitchell

The New South Wales government expects to see psychiatrists quitting en-masse after pay negotiations failed to resolve differences with their specialists. [...] Um, but we're needing leadership, not just from health ministers like Mark Butler, who's very sympathetic, and Rose Jackson, also sympathetic in New South Wales.

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### ABC Radio Adelaide, Mornings, 22/01/2025, Rory McClaren

Interview with caller Tim, who says Mark Butler gets a bit of an easy run on these tobacco excise hikes. It has reduced the revenues to the government that's flowing to the federal government by 33%. It's created a new business activity for the illegal business activity, with the states having to pick up the costs of the policing.

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[Back to Top](#)

## MINISTER WELLS

### 'We're breaking down barriers': Huge funding boost for women's tennis

4BC, Other, 22/01/2025, Peter Fegan

The Albanese government will be providing Tennis Australia with \$992,000 worth of funding to support more women and girls playing tennis. Federal Minister for Sport Anika Wells told Peter Fegan on 4BC Breakfast, "We know that they're [The next Ash Barty's] out there in Australia, in suburbs and regions across the place.

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## Anika Wells elevated to cabinet

Community Care Review, Other, 22/01/2025, Jodie Wolf

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced that Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells has been promoted to cabinet. During a press conference in Canberra on Thursday, Mr Albanese listed several updates to the cabinet and ministry, stating that Ms Wells has delivered an “outstanding” job to date as Minister for Aged Care.

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## ABC News, News Breakfast, 22/01/2025, James Glenday and Bridget Brennan

Interview with Minister for Sport Anika Wells. Compere says the federal government, along with Tennis Australia, have announced a boost in funding to help more women and girls to get into tennis. Wells points out that the Albanese Government will be putting up almost \$1m to support women and girls playing tennis.

Similar content in: [Channel 9 \(Melbourne\)](#).

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[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

### Seven Rockhampton, Seven Local News, 22/01/2025, Joanne Desmond and Ned Balme

Free mental health care is now more accessible in central Qld, with new walk-in centres officially opening in Rockhampton and Gladstone. The facilities are two of 61 centres being rolled out across the country by the Albanese government, with seven already open in Queensland. Assistant Minister for Mental Health, Emma McBride, says the centres are breaking down barriers to care.

Similar content in: [Triple M Central Coast \(Gosford\)](#), [hit101.3 Central Coast \(Gosford\)](#)

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### Triple M Central Queensland, Breakfast, 22/01/2025, Shannon 'Pinky' Neven and Anthony Stefanos

Interview with Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Rural and Regional Health, Emma McBride. McBride points out that as someone who has seen what mental health can do in the community, it's heartening that she's in a position to take action on this particular matter.

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### ABC Capricornia, Breakfast, 22/01/2025, Jeremy Jones

Interview with Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention for Rural and Regional Communities, Emma McBride. Compere mentions that a new mental health service is looking to make the process of accessing it easier for those needing it. McBride recalls that last year, she announced that the Albanese Labor Government will be opening two Medical mental health centres in Central Qld with one currently in Rockhampton and the other in Gladstone.

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[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

### Vasey RSL Care wins \$142k in veteran wellbeing funding

Australian Seniors News, Other, 22/01/2025

Vasey RSL Care has been awarded \$142,439 under the Federal Government's Veteran Wellbeing Grant 2023-24 round. The funding will enable the purchase of a utility vehicle and a bus to enhance the delivery of its innovative V Centre Veteran Empowerment Program in Ivanhoe. [...] To celebrate the funding announcement, Vasey RSL Care hosted the local federal member for Jagajaga, Kate Thwaites MP, at the V Centre.

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[Back to Top](#)

## DEPARTMENT

### Carer charged with fraud refused bail

Southern Highlands Express, General News, 22/01/2025, Michael Sharp, Page 1

A carer charged with 57 offences, primarily relating to an alleged fraud involving an 89-year-old female resident of a nursing home, was refused bail when she appeared in Moss Vale Local Court last week. [...] The Federal Department of Health and Aged Care's elder abuse phone line is 1800 ELDERHelp (1800 353 374) and the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline can be contacted 0111800 628 221 between 9am and 4pm or by sending an email to [helpline@adc.nsw](mailto:helpline@adc.nsw).

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### Star Ratings: Significant enhancements needed

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 22/01/2025, Jodie Wolf

Star Ratings can continue to be honed and improved to ensure it reaches its key objectives going forward, says a report released by the Department of Health and Aged Care. Allan + Clarke Consulting, who published the report this month note that despite the progress made by the Star Ratings, "there remains significant scope for enhancement, and it will take time for the initiative to mature and fully achieve its intended objectives."

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### Dutton's take on public servants is just game-talk

The Mandarin, Other, 20/01/2025, Bernard Keane

The new era of bigger government ushered in by Scott Morrison appears unlikely to end, no matter what the Coalition promises. Voters certainly don't appear to have any appetite for a retreat back to the era of smaller government.

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[Back to Top](#)

## VACCINES

### There's a new vaccine to cure UTIs. Only, there's a catch.

Mamamia, Other, 22/01/2025, Iris Lim

In a recent TikTok video , Australian media personality Abbie Chatfield shared she was starting a vaccine to protect against urinary tract infections (UTIs). "Huge news for the UTI gurlies. I am starting a UTI vaccine tonight for the first time," she said.

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[Back to Top](#)

### Concessions help older Aussies balance the books. Are you missing out?

Canberra Times, Other, 22/01/2025, Eileen Wood

The income limit for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card was indexed in September last year, going up from \$95,400 to \$99,025 for singles (up \$3,625) and from \$152,640 to \$158,440 for couples (up \$5,800). This means people over 67 can earn more than previously allowed and still get a CSHC.

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

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### Compliance up but work still needed

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 22/01/2025, Jodie Wolf

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's latest Sector Performance Report shows more home care providers are complying with the quality standards but also that improvements are still needed. The report covers the July to September 2024 quarter, known as Q1, and includes a foreward from Janet Anderson, who was Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner at the time, before she handed the baton to Liz Hefren-Webb in January of this year.

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### Rik Dawson commences as APA president

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 22/01/2025, Katarina Lloyd Jones

With the new year, Dr Rik Dawson – a post-doctoral researcher from the Institute for Musculoskeletal Health at the University of Sydney – has begun his role as national president of the Australia Physiotherapy Association. Formerly vice president of the peak body, Dr Dawson was named president elect last year and will occupy the position for two years from 1 January 2025.

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[Back to Top](#)

## POPULATION HEALTH

### Your home is full of these chemicals. Your tap water provider wants them banned

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 22/01/2025, Carrie Fellner

The nation's drinking water providers, including Sydney Water, have called for a blanket ban on the entire family of "forever chemicals" in Australian consumer goods to stop the pollution of tap water with the cancer-linked toxins. The Water Services Association of Australia made the dramatic call to action at a Senate inquiry on Wednesday, arguing it was necessary to protect public health and prevent consumers from being saddled with the exorbitant costs of treating water once it was contaminated.

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### Why aren't these booze stats keeping us awake at night?

The Australian, Other, 22/01/2025, Matthew Condon

Once upon a time a mug of Horlicks was allegedly a guaranteed passport to the land of Nod. Not to forget Ovaltine Sleep, the "calming" chocolate drink that, according to literature on the tin, has been "nurturing Australian families for over 100 years". [...] In December, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released its own report into "Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in Australia".

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### Maintaining a scorecard on hate crimes is no way forward

The Australian, Other, 22/01/2025, Aftab Malik

First it was "fictitious" and now attacks against the Jewish community are "far more prolific". It appears members of the Liberal Party are now wanting to keep a scorecard on acts of hate towards the Muslim

and Jewish communities.

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## Child safety experts urge Queensland government to bring forward Reportable Conduct Scheme

ABC Online, Other, 22/01/2025, Alex Brewster

New reporting frameworks to improve how institutions handle child sexual abuse complaints must be implemented "at haste", according to Queensland's peak body for child and family services. The comments follow the state government launching a review into Queensland's child protection systems on Tuesday, after the conviction of notorious paedophile Ashley Paul Griffith last year.

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## W-H-O are you? World mulls the impact of US quitting global health agency

SBS, Other, 22/01/2025, Deborah Groarke

Donald Trump has used one of the flurry of executive actions he's issued on his first day back in the White House to initiate the withdrawal of the United States from the World Health Organization. Many scientists fear it could roll back decades-long gains in fighting diseases like AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

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[Back to Top](#)

## CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

### Katie Henderson: Breast cancer patient reveals shocking delays

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 22/01/2025, Emma Cam

A breast cancer survivor has to fly to Victoria for tests to avoid a four-month delay following the shock closure of a critical service in Far North Queensland. Cairns woman Katie Henderson, 45, was diagnosed with breast cancer at 35 but is now awaiting further scans after her specialist found another lump in December last year.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#).

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### Researchers identify two specific factors most important for slashing cancer risk - and it's not BMI

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 22/01/2025, Kate Pickles

Keeping a slim waist while exercising regularly is most effective for keeping cancer at bay, research suggests. One or the other is 'insufficient' to maximise the reduction in cancer risk, a study involving more than 315,000 Britons found.

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### Fitness and muscle strength could halve cancer patient deaths, study suggests

The Guardian, Other, 22/01/2025, Andrew Gregory

Muscular strength and good physical fitness could almost halve the risk of cancer patients dying from their disease, according to a study that suggests tailored exercise plans may increase survival. The likelihood of people dying from their cancer has decreased significantly in recent decades owing to greater awareness of symptoms, and better access to treatment and care.

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[Back to Top](#)

### Parliamentary inquiry to hear how state gov prevented GPs from going bust

The Courier Mail, Other, 22/01/2025, Jackie Sinnerton

A parliamentary inquiry is to hear how the Queensland government has saved GPs from going bust and allowed patients more affordable care. As Queensland leads Australia with the payroll tax exemption for specialist GPs, one of the state's top doctors will call for a country wide abolishment of the tax at a parliamentary probe on Thursday.

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#).

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### Noosa mayor Frank Wilkie addresses fluoride debate

Townsville Bulletin, Other, 22/01/2025, Chloe Grimshaw

A Queensland mayor has warned ratepayers the removal of fluoride from drinking water could cost more than \$20m, while adding the "weight of advice" from health experts was a key factor in the council's decision. Noosa mayor Frank Wilkie is expected to present the council's stance on the defluoridation of the region's drinking water in his mayoral minute at the council's ordinary meeting on Thursday.

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### Healthscope speaks out about private health dispute, potential impact on Tasmanian patients

ABC Online, Other, 22/01/2025, Leon Compton

It's a dispute between private health insurance fund Bupa, the funds managed by the Health Services Alliance, and one of Tasmania's few private hospital operators — Healthscope. If an agreement isn't reached soon, the dispute could see Tasmanians caught in the crossfire.

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### A 'cautionary' tale: Pitfalls of the UK physician assistant model

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 22/01/2025, Morgan Liotta

A fresh warning has emerged about Australia following down the path of the United Kingdom's physician assistant (PA) model, with research highlighting its failing should act as a 'cautionary lesson' for other countries. The new research from the UK examines the outcomes of PAs embedded in the country's National Health System (NHS), revealing its pitfalls and future consequences.

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### 2GB, Breakfast, 22/01/2025, Ben Fordham

Compere says some mental health wards have started closing, and for the hospitals that aren't experiencing closures, they are slashing the number of beds available. He states that this is because a pay dispute between psychiatrists and the NSW Government wherein they are seeking to get a 25% payrise, but the bid was rejected.

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### ABC Radio Canberra, Mornings, 22/01/2025, Emma Bickley

The Royal Australian College of GPs has found less than half of the available training positions for future GPs across the ACT and southern New South Wales have been filled this year. The data also reveals Canberra still has fewer GPs per capita than any other capital city.

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### ABC Radio Canberra, Breakfast, 22/01/2025, Georgia Stynes

Interview with Dr. Rebekah Hoffman, chair of NSW and ACT, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Compere mentions that fewer than half of ACT's general practitioners training spots have

been filled. Hoffman says they've noticed that there are more doctors that want to be GPs across Australia, as they've overfilled their places by 20% more than 2023.

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[Back to Top](#)

## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

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[Back to Top](#)

## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### GP shortages sting regional towns as 'bidding war' heats up

ABC Online, Other, 22/01/2025, Cason Ho

A bidding war is brewing in Australia's regional and remote towns as the country wrestles with a worsening doctor shortage. Australia is approximately 2,400 full-time equivalent GPs short of what it needs, according to Department of Health estimates.

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### Lack of incentives fuelling GP shortfall: RACGP

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 22/01/2025, Jo-Anne Roberts

A 'lack of investment' leaves Canberra as Australia's worst capital for GP access, while incentives in Tasmania bolster GP numbers. This year, 47 future GPs will begin training throughout Tasmania, up from 30 in 2024.

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[Back to Top](#)

## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

### LTR Pharma inks national pharmacy distribution deal for its ED therapy

The Australian, Other, 22/01/2025

LTR Pharma secures deal with pharmaceutical wholesaler Symbion for ED treatment Spontan. Symbion will establish an Australia-wide distribution network for the nasal spray Partnership supports LTR Pharma's early access scheme and lays foundation for future commercial launch

Also reported by: [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#).

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[Back to Top](#)

## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

### Does technology in health care deliver on its promise?

Australian Pharmacist, Other, 22/01/2025, Ruth Cooper



Digital health tools can improve medicine safety and make systems more efficient – but poor system design often doesn't bring healthcare practitioners and their patients on the journey. From My Health Record to real-time prescription monitoring, electronic prescriptions and secure messaging, Australian pharmacists routinely use digital health in their daily practice.

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[Back to Top](#)

## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### Legal stoush looms over cosmetic injectables rules

The Australian, Other, 22/01/2025, Penny Timms

A potential legal stoush is brewing in Queensland where hundreds of cosmetic injectables businesses have been told their operating models don't comply with regulations. [...] While the legislation in question is federal, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency said it was up to the states and territories to regulate access to the drugs and poisons.

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### Geelong surgeon Xiao Bo Zhang resigns from Barwon Health

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 22/01/2025

A Geelong surgeon resigned from his job just days before his criminal trial was due to begin, it can be revealed. [...] Zhang is still a registered medical practitioner on the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) register.

*Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#).*

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[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### ABC News, ABC Nightly News, 22/01/2025, Manny Tsigas

Donating blood is a familiar concept, but bone donation is much less well known, despite bone graft being the second most transplanted tissue. There's a constant shortage in bone banks around the country.

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[Back to Top](#)

## SPORT

### Channel 7, Sunrise, 22/01/2025, Matt Shirvington and Natalie Barr

Queensland's former state government is being asked to explain a huge shortfall in funds allocated for the 2032 Olympic Games athletes' villages. Reporter Georgia Chumley says the \$3.5 billion budget shortfall says it is a huge amount of money to come up with, otherwise the athletes won't have anywhere to sleep.

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### Channel 9, Today , 22/01/2025, Karl Stefanovic and Sarah Abo

It's been revealed this morning billions of dollars are missing in planning to build the athletes accommodation for the Brisbane Olympics. The cost is expected to reach \$3.4 billion. That is the equivalent of building a brand-new stadium.

## 4BC, Breakfast , 22/01/2025, Peter Fegan

The Queensland government say Labor failed to allocate funding for the athletes' villages for Brisbane 2032. It's understood four villages will cost \$3.5 billion, with just \$155 million allocated under the former government.

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

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[Back to Top](#)

## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### Feds look to address gender-based violence with funding for Central Australian organisations

National Indigenous Times, Other, 22/01/2025, Dechlan Brennan

Funding for prevention and intervention initiatives in Central Australia to address gender-based violence has been announced by the Federal Government. The funding comes in the wake of a horror 2024 for the Northern Territory, with the "crisis" of gendered violence seeing at least ten First Nations women killed in alleged domestic violence attacks

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### Albanese government announces funding for infrastructure and DV projects in remote and Central Australia

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 22/01/2025, Fia Walsh

The federal government will today announce two multimillion-dollar funding pools for the Northern Territory, supporting shovel-ready infrastructure projects and domestic violence programs. Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth will visit Alice Springs on Wednesday to allocate up to \$27m for Central Australia and remote communities.

*Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#)*

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## INTERIM AUSTRALIAN CDC

### Stay safe this summer

Shepparton News Online, Other, 22/01/2025

State member for Northern Victoria, Gaelle Broad, is warning the community to be alert this summer after Japanese encephalitis was detected in the region. [...] People in high-risk areas may be eligible for a free Japanese encephalitis vaccine which is available at local GPs, Aboriginal health organisations, community pharmacies and local councils.

[Read More](#)[Back to Top](#)

## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

# TGA vape crackdown continues

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 22/01/2025

Authorities issue 20 infringement notices to Melbourne-based businesses as part of vape crackdown. Joint activity by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and the Victorian Department of Health targeting non-pharmacy vape sales in December 2024 resulted in infringement notices totaling \$396,000

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# New warning for asthma medication

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 22/01/2025, Leopold Hamulczyk

A new boxed warning about potentially serious neuropsychiatric events is being added to the safety information for prescription asthma and allergic rhinitis medication, montelukast. The safety update follows an investigation by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

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# The strange reason this summer essential might be getting more expensive

The Courier Mail, Other, 22/01/2025, Cassidy Pearce

There are few things more important than ensuring your skin is protected during the hot Australian summer But, it might be about to get even more expensive to do so. The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is considering changing the way tax is charged on sunscreen products - but one brand is hitting back.

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

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# Channel 7, Seven News, 22/01/2025, Peter Mitchell

The TGA is cracking down on Melbourne retailers selling illegal vapes. In December alone, authorities fined 20 businesses around \$20,000 each. More than 7 million vaping products have been seized in the past 12 months.

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[Back to Top](#)

## OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

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[Back to Top](#)

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[Back to Top](#)

## AICIS

# Governments slammed for handling of PFAS contamination in Western Sydney, Blue Mountains

ABC Online, Other, 22/01/2025, Xanthe Gregory

Furious community members have told a federal PFAS inquiry that the Commonwealth's handling of the issue amounted to "reckless misconduct" and "endangerment" of the public. The NSW Environment Protection Authority (NSW EPA) has also fired shots at the federal government over its management of

contamination at air force and naval bases and airports where firefighting foams containing per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) were historically used.

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## **Forever chemicals being found 'literally everywhere'**

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 22/01/2025

Australia needs to prevent the introduction of more "forever chemicals" amid warnings it is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with the contaminants already in the environment. A federal senate inquiry is examining the extent of contaminations from the PFAS family of chemicals, which do not naturally break down and have been linked to health problems like cancer.

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[Back to Top](#)

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