



Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care

TODAY'S NEWS

Tuesday, 28th January 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Courier Mail](#)** (page 1) reports an internal investigation has been launched after a Cairns gender services facility prescribed puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormones to 17 children aged as young as 12 without securing the required medical checks and parental consent.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 3) reports an increasing incidence of breast, thyroid and colorectal cancers are being detected in younger Australians, with women aged 25-49 now accounting for a fifth of all breast cancers, with calls for doctors to avoid telling people they are too young to have cancer. *Also reported by: The Courier Mail, Channel 9, 2CC.*
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 3) reports the World Health Organisation is urging member states to adopt new guidelines limiting sodium intake to two milligrams a day and encourage people to swap table salt for potassium-rich salt substitutes.
- **[The West Australian](#)** (page 7) reports a Murdoch University study found one hour of moderate exercise a day causes the body to release the same appetite-suppressing chemicals as weight-loss drugs such as Ozempic.
- **[The Australian Financial Review](#)** (page 13) reports a Health Department proposal to have health insurers increase access to maternity cover and pay more for hospital-in-the home

programs have the funds arguing they will have to increase premiums to pay for the plans. Health Minister Mark Butler has already rejected a big by funds to increase premiums by 6 per cent this year.

- **Channel 9** reports overseas nurses from selected countries will have their qualifications recognised under a fast-track system intended to alleviate mass shortage in Australian hospitals, with Health Minister Mark Butler saying some nurses are now waiting up to 12 months to gain approval to work. *Also reported by: The Daily Telegraph, Channel 7, Sky News, 2GB, 3AW.*
- **The Weekly Source** (online) reports the federal government has allocated \$5.2 million over the next three years to fund a pilot program of the Retirement Living Council's "Shared Care" concept, which would allow participants to pool a portion of their Community and Home support packages to achieve economies of scale in service delivery.

MINISTER BUTLER

Insurers balk at Labor pitch to expand maternity cover

Australian Financial Review, Companies and Markets, 28/01/2025, Michael Smith, Page 13

Health insurers will have to increase funding for hospital-in-the-home programs, expand access to maternity cover and offer more contracts to regional hospitals under an Albanese government proposal.

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Raising funds

The Australian, Business News, 28/01/2025, Yoni Bashan and Nick Evans, Page 14

The election nears, and as Anthony Albanese weighs a date to visit the GovernorGeneral it's becoming obvious how his cabinet will be spending their spare evenings. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler is down to wow Adelaide's lunchtime corporate crowd on February 18, with Penny Wong hosting a \$4000 afternoon tea in Melbourne the following day.

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Global health shakeup and other health and aged care news

Croakey, Other, 27/01/2025, Melissa Sweet

The World Health Organization has begun cutbacks to address the instability and looming funding shortfall caused by the Trump Administration's plan to withdraw from the organisation, [...] The Department of Health and Aged Care released a draft of the National Allied Health Workforce Strategy for consultation.

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Channel 9, Today , 27/01/2025, Karl Stefanovic and Sarah Abo

Overseas nurses will be fast tracked for employment in Australia in a bid to beat mass shortages. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler notes overseas nurses are waiting up to 12 months to be approved.

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Channel 7, Seven News, 27/01/2025, Peter Mitchell

Nurses from six countries will be fast-tracked to work in Australia under a new streamlined approval process. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler believes Australian patients will ultimately benefit from it.

Also reported by: [Seven Tasmania \(Hobart\)](#).

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2GB, Breakfast, 27/01/2025, Ben Fordham

Nurses from a handful of countries will soon have their qualifications recognised much faster in

Australia. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says the changes will make a difference.

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3AW, 12:00 News, 27/01/2025

Nurses from countries like the US, the UK, Ireland, Singapore, Canada, and Spain have been fast tracked to employment, in order to help with Australia's staffing shortages. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says there's been a record number of nurses but long wait times are being experienced.

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MINISTER WELLS

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DEPARTMENT

How Australia's 'unfair' dental system – and the way \$1.3bn is spent – is driving inequality and leaving millions of people behind

The Guardian, Other, 28/01/2025, Natasha May

Patients bear the brunt of dentist fees. But of the \$1.3bn the federal government spends on the nation's teeth, more than half goes to subsidising the uptake of private health insurance. [...] In the 2023-24 financial year, a spokesperson for the Department of Health and Aged Care said more than 2.4 million children were eligible for the scheme, but only 39.2% used it.

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Global health shakeup and other health and aged care news

Croakey, Other, 27/01/2025, Melissa Sweet

The World Health Organization has begun cutbacks to address the instability and looming funding shortfall caused by the Trump Administration's plan to withdraw from the organisation, [...] The Department of Health and Aged Care released a draft of the National Allied Health Workforce Strategy for consultation.

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VACCINES

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Swift demise for educated

West Australian, General News, 28/01/2025, Kate Pickles, Page 12

Research suggests university graduates are more likely to suffer a swift dementia demise than their less educated peers. Those who are educated for longer have "brain reserves" helping them fend off symptoms, a review of evidence found.

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Plan to clamp down on ageism

Hobart Mercury, General News, 28/01/2025, David Killick, Page 7

Groups representing older Tasmanians have welcomed a new government strategy to look after the state's ageing population. Refined by the input of more than 1500 Tasmanians, The Respectful, Age-friendly Island: Older Tasmanians' Action Plan 2025-2029 was an attempt to address the issues facing seniors, Community Services Minister Roger Jaensch said.

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Annuities: A promising idea gets tangled in flawed thinking

The Australian, Other, 27/01/2025, James Kirby

It's always a shame when a good idea is attached to such a bad idea that the initial proposal gets shot to pieces. A new report by the Grattan Institute examined the attractive concept of "annuities" whereby older Australians can get a regular payment for life in return for an upfront investment.

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Why working from home could be here to stay in Australia

7news.com.au, Other, 27/01/2025, Dominique Tassell

Amid a slew of companies demanding workers return to the office, an international think tank has released a report claiming working from home is here to stay. [...] Australia was also identified in the report as experiencing "more significant effects from declining working-age populations", alongside Germany and Japan.

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Towns, businesses miss out unless they provide accessible tourism for people with disability

ABC Online, Other, 27/01/2025, Olivia-Sanders

Last summer, John Wilson went to the beach for the first time in 30 years. It was all thanks to an accessible beach day hosted by a surf lifesaving club at Port Campbell, on Victoria's Great Ocean Road.

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Aged care researcher among hundreds honoured

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 27/01/2025, Katarina Lloyd Jones

Professor Samar Mouin Aoun is one of the 457 people honoured in the General Division of the Order of Australia this year, and one of 108 of those appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, or AM.

Professor Aoun has been honoured for her significant service to community health through palliative care, aged care research and tertiary education at the 50th Australia Day honours.

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A stubborn Albanese goes quietly to his — and Labor's — defeat

Crikey, Other, 27/01/2025, Bernard Keane

Managing but not governing. In charge but not in power. [...] Labor has rightly lifted remuneration for aged care workers and childcare workers because of the compelling policy reasons to ensure those sectors stop haemorrhaging workers.

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\$5.2M over three years for pilot program for Retirement Living Council's Shared Care concept

The Weekly Source, Other, 27/01/2025, Ian Horswill

The concept, the brainchild of Cameron Holland, the former CEO of Ryman Healthcare Australia, is likely to happen. Treasurer Jim Chalmers announced last month \$5.2 million over three years from FY26 to initiate a pilot program that will "allow participants to combine their budgets to achieve economies of scale in service delivery".

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Lifestyle SA managing director Stephen Norris invests \$2.5M in technology solutions business Talius

The Weekly Source, Other, 27/01/2025, Ian Horswill

Stephen, who is also part owner of Lifestyle SA's 11 retirement villages in South Australia, said of his strategic investment: "The Aged Care Sector is at a critical juncture and the only path to drive better outcomes for the end client is via technology" "Operators will need help and having searched far and wide in the sector, it was clear to me that the Talius platform is market leading.

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POPULATION HEALTH

Don't take this with a pinch of salt: WHO

The Australian, General News, 28/01/2025, Penny Timms, Page 3

Australians are being urged to switch table salt for lower-sodium salt substitutes at home in a global effort to improve heart health, but there are concerns the new guidelines do not go far enough. The World Health Organisation is leading the push and urging member states to adopt the new guidelines, which are being released on Tuesday.

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Exercise matches Ozempic effects

West Australian, General News, 28/01/2025, Claire Sadler, Page 7

A ground-breaking WA study has revealed that one hour of moderate exercise a day releases the same appetite-suppressing chemicals in the body as weightloss injections such as Ozempic. The Murdoch University research assessed food intake and appetite as well as changes in the hormones which help to regulate hunger.

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Children's gender scandal

Courier Mail, General News, 28/01/2025, Jackie Sinnerton and Jill Poulsen, Page 1

Queensland children as young as 12 have been prescribed puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormones without proper medical support and parental consent. The Crisafulli government has been

rocked by explosive claims that rogue gender services have been operating in Cairns, with Queensland Health now launching an independent inquiry.

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#).

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Is there any point in drinking decaf coffee?

Australian Financial Review, Other, 27/01/2025, Lauren Shirreff

It's a kick-start for the day, a jolt many of us need to power through, and one of the last socially acceptable addictions. It's only when we have to go without coffee that we realise how badly we rely on it.

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'Rogue' gender clinics giving Qld kids puberty blockers without parental consent

The Courier Mail, Other, 27/01/2025, Jackie Sinnerton and Jill Poulsen

Explosive claims that rogue gender services in north Queensland are giving kids as young as 12 puberty blockers, without consent or medical support, have sparked an independent inquiry. Queensland children as young as 12 have been prescribed puberty blockers and gender affirming hormones without proper medical support and parental consent.

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Fluoridation of drinking water is a public health success story – why does the debate continue?

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 28/01/2025

The addition of fluoride to drinking water has improved dental health worldwide for over 70 years but is still hindered by misinformation; let's look at the evidence. In the recent past, it was not uncommon for people to lose the majority, or even all, of their adult teeth before reaching old age.

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Taking action to transform care for COPD patients

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 28/01/2025

A national clinical care standard is set to improve outcomes and reduce potentially avoidable hospital admissions for the incurable lung condition, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD is a significant public health challenge in Australia, affecting an estimated 1 in 13 people over the age of 40 years.

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Japanese encephalitis virus on the rise

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 28/01/2025

Health care professionals are being urged to be vigilant after a resurgence of Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) has been reported across New South Wales and Victoria. Mosquitoes infected with the virus have recently been detected in the Moira Shire in Victoria's north.

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

GPs told to wake up to increase in early cancer

The Australian, General News, 28/01/2025, Stephen Lunn, Page 3

Katie Elson is not yet 30. In early 2022 her partner noticed a small lump in her breast. [...] New Victorian Cancer Council data shows breast cancer for 25-49 year-old women rose 0.6 per cent annually over the past decade and more than one-fifth of cases are now in that age bracket.

Clinical trials for rural patients in doubt

The Australian, General News, 28/01/2025, Summer Liu, Page 7

John Robson thinks he'd be dead if not for the cutting-edge clinical trial that started near his home in Bendigo after he was diagnosed with stage 4C melanoma four years ago. "Honestly, my chances of beating this thing came down to going on a trial ... I was happy to give it a go because it was in Bendigo," Mr Robson told The Australian.

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Early-onset breast cancer on the rise

Courier Mail, General News, 28/01/2025, Page 17

Early-onset breast cancer now accounts for more than one-fifth of all breast cancer cases in Victoria. The 1067 diagnoses out of 5197 breast cancer cases is indicative of a national trend.

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The bottom line is that we need to open up about our bums

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 27/01/2025, Richard Hillman

We don't talk about our bums enough. No, I should be more specific. We don't talk about our anuses enough.

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Australian-first biobank for genetic hearing loss coming to WA in a bid to develop new therapies and cures

West Australian, Other, 27/01/2025, Claire Sadler

An Australian-first biobank to store genetic tissue is being set up in WA in a bid to help advance treatments and cures for hearing loss. The Australasian Hearing Registry and Biobank, developed by Ear Science, will store genetic tissue linked to hearing loss with the goal of advancing personalised care, new treatments and even cures.

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Channel 9, Nine News, 27/01/2025, Michael Thomson

A concerning number of young women are being diagnosed with breast cancer, prompting calls from Breast Cancer Network Australia. It's time to shatter the misconception it's an older person's disease.

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Channel 9, Nine News, 27/01/2025, Alicia Loxley and Tom Steinfort

An alarming number of young women are being diagnosed with breast cancer, prompting calls from Breast Cancer Network Australia to shatter the misconception that it's an older person's disease.

Also reported by: [Channel 9 \(Brisbane\)](#).

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2CC, Canberra Live, 27/01/2025, Leon Delaney

Interview with Vicki Durston, Director of policy, advocacy and support services at Breast Cancer Network of Australia. Durston comments on the growing number of young women getting diagnosed with breast cancer. She says it is not a dramatic increase, but enough to keep them alert on the upward trend.

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Is assisted suicide a 'clear and present danger' to people with disabilities? A new film asks tough questions

The Guardian, Other, 27/01/2025, Oliver Conroy

Reid Davenport, whose documentary Life After is at Sundance, thinks euthanasia has 'a lot to do with cost savings' In 1983, Elizabeth Bouvia, a 26-year-old woman in California with a non-terminal but debilitating illness, tried to starve herself to death in a hospital.

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Radio National, Breakfast, 27/01/2025, Sally Sara

Interview with Doctor Michael Bonning, Chair in Public health for the Australian Medical Association, about skincare product ads targeting young children. Bonning comments on the marketing of skin products, noting some brands are using younger people in their advertising.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Sicker, poorer: time to turn our attention to 'GP deserts'

Canberra Times, General News, 28/01/2025, Peter Breadon and Wendy Hu, Page 16

Some communities are "GP deserts", where there are too few GPs to ensure everyone can get the care they need when they need it. These communities are typically sicker and poorer than the rest of Australia, but receive less care and face higher fees.

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Fears for 'overly stretched' nurses

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 28/01/2025, Natalie Croxon, Page 3

There are concerns nurses working in mental health in the Illawarra Shoalhaven will shoulder an increased workload and patients will face longer waits for care as the public health system contends with the mass resignation of psychiatrists. Nine psychiatrists within the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) are among about 200 who flagged their resignation over a pay dispute with the NSW government.

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Private-sector switch pays off for nurse

Newcastle Herald, General News, 28/01/2025, Damon Cronshaw, Page 5

Irene Feros believes more nurses could leave public hospitals for better pay in the private sector if their wages don't rise enough. Ms Feros, a nurse at the Tomago Aluminium smelter, said working in hospitals was tough.

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Foreign nurses set to practice in Australia

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 27/01/2025

The federal government will introduce a new scheme to introduce more foreign nurses to work in Australia to address the projected shortfall of over 70,000 nurses in the country by 2035. Registered nurses from Britain, Ireland, Singapore, Spain and the US will be eligible to apply for an Australian nursing registration.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#).

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'It isn't a long-term strategy': Relief on the horizon for understaffed health sector

4BC, Other, 27/01/2025, Peter Fegan

The Federal Government is set to speed up the process by which they recognise the qualifications of nurses from a number of countries in a bid to help the critical shortage of health staff in Australia. Australian Medical Association in Queensland President Dr Nick Yim told Peter Fegan on 4BC Breakfast, "It isn't a long-term strategy, as you say, it is a Band-Aid fix.

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Sky News Live, Afternoon Agenda, 27/01/2025, Holly Stearnes

The federal government will introduce a new scheme to bring in more foreign nurses to work in Australia, in response to a shortage of nurses. The new scheme will work to streamline the registration of overseas nurses from the approved countries.

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

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SPORT

Historic Test for women

For the first time in 75 years, women's Test cricket will take centre stage at the Melbourne Cricket Ground this week. On Thursday, the Australian women's cricket team will face England in a highly anticipated day-night Test match.

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Gambling ads to be banned on trains and buses

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 28/01/2025, Alexandra Smith, Page 3

The NSW Labor government will ban gambling advertising on public transport including axing all internal and external promotions on trains, buses and light rail and at stations and ferry wharves amid criticism that a Brisbane-based sports betting app was spruiked across the network. Gambling promotions have long been a feature on the NSW transport network, which operates one of the largest portfolios of advertising assets across Australia.

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HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

GSK and Oxford researchers to create cancer vaccine

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 27/01/2025

Pharmaceutical giant gsk and the University of Oxford are creating a new cancer vaccine to prevent the disease from developing. The partnership intends to create a vaccine or vaccines which target cells at the pre-cancerous stage, before the disease has taken hold and begun to wreak havoc on the body.

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GSK signs £50m deal with Oxford University on cancer vaccines

The Guardian, Other, 27/01/2025, Jasper Jolly

GSK has said it will spend £50m on a project with the University of Oxford to investigate whether vaccines could be used to prevent some cancers. The FTSE 100 pharmaceutical company said that the GSK-Oxford Cancer Immuno-Prevention Programme will look at how pre-cancerous cells develop.

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Neurons with cardiovascular function detected in human vagus nerve for the first time

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 28/01/2025

Researchers at Monash University have isolated the electrical activity of single neurons from recordings of human vagus nerves and identified a subset that have cardiovascular function. The vagus nerves contain the axons of neurons that monitor or modify the function of the cardiovascular system.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Children's Commissioners urge NT government to scrap planned changes to Aboriginal child placement principles

The Courier Mail, Other, 27/01/2025, Fia Walsh

Australia's national Children's Commissioners have warned against proposed changes to child protection laws in the Northern Territory, arguing they would undermine basic protections for First Nations children to be able to grow up with their culture and community. But Child Protection Minister Robyn Cahill says there is "misinformation" around the move.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#)

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

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OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

One in ten road crash drivers are on ice

Central Western Daily, General News, 28/01/2025, Katelyn Catanzariti, Page 12

About one in ten drivers hurt or killed in road crashes have the drug ice in their system, a decade-long study has found. The Victorian study, which is the largest of its kind in Australia, analysed data from nearly 20,000 injured and more than 1500 deceased drivers between 2010 and 2019, focusing on the presence of alcohol, methylamphetamine (ice), MDMA, and cannabis in their blood.

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FOOD STANDARDS

US bans red food dye. Where to for us?

Age, General News, 28/01/2025, Nell Geraets, Page 14

From gummy lollies to cupcake icing, food manufacturers love a cherry-red product. But last week, one of the most common food dyes was banned in the United States. [...] According to a Food Standards Australia New Zealand spokesperson, preserved cherries and icings or frostings are the only foods that still contain Red No.3.

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