



Australian Government
Department of Health
and Aged Care

TODAY'S NEWS

Thursday, 6th March 2025

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LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Australian \(page 2\)](#)** reports almost one in five Australians aged 18-34 have experienced suicidal distress in the past 12 months, according to Suicide Prevention Australia's latest community tracker.
- **[The Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#)** reports Health Minister Mark Butler has allowed the "big three" health insurers in Medibank, Bupa and Nib, to charge above average premium increases, despite the three companies posting a combined pre-tax profit of \$1.7 billion.
- **[The Australian Financial Review](#)** (page 1) reports Australia's \$250 billion healthcare system will be overwhelmed by an aging population, with a four-fold increase in the number of people turning 80 expected to strain services, warns the head of health insurance company Australian Unity.
- **[The Australian \(Online\)](#)** reports the Albanese government has allocated \$143 million to fund precision cancer treatment trials, with Health Minister Mark Butler saying the funding injection will improve outcomes for those with less common and rare cancers,

Calls to slash PBS co-payment with 1 in 4 women forced to skip prescribed medicines in cost crisis

The Australian, Other, 06/03/2025, Jessica Wang

More than one in four women have forgone buying their medication, with pharmacists reporting increasing cases of patients scrimping on essential prescriptions for like high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma. [...] The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has called on Health Minister Mark Butler to lower the maximum PBS co-payment from \$31.90 to \$19.

[Read More](#)

Labor's hospital funding push will drive up premiums, insurers warn

Australian Financial Review, Other, 05/03/2025, Michael Smith

Private health insurers warn they will be forced to raise premiums for 15 million Australians, pushing many out of cover, if they are made to increase funding to private hospitals under a Labor proposal.

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Calls to slash PBS co-payment with 1 in 4 women forced to skip prescribed medicines in cost crisis

Townsville Bulletin, Other, 06/03/2025, Jessica Wang

New data has revealed an alarming trend in women opting to forgo vital medications due to cost pressures, with calls for the PBS co-payment to be slashed. [...] While Health Minister Mark Butler wouldn't directly address whether Labor would support a reduction to the PBS maximum co-payment, he pointed to Labor's record of introducing 60-day prescriptions, lowering the maximum PBS co-payment, and freezing the \$7.70 concession card rate for medicine co-payments until 2029.

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

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'Patients first': Health minister slams insurers, demands cash splash

Newcastle Herald, Other, 05/03/2025, Damon Cronshaw

Hunter private hospitals are set for a boost after Health Minister Mark Butler directed insurers to hand over more money to cover the rising costs of treating patients. Mr Butler threatened the insurers with "regulatory action" on Wednesday, if they did not "ensure patients can access the care they need".

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ACRRM urges Federal Government to back rural generalists in budget

Augusta-Margaret River Times, Other, 05/03/2025, Cain Andrews

The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine is calling for greater investment in rural generalist doctors to improve healthcare access in remote communities as part of its 2025-26 Federal Budget submission. With Health Minister Mark Butler signalling formal recognition of rural generalist medicine in 2025, the college says now is the time to fully mobilise the workforce and ensure its success.

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CHA endorses government action on private health insurers

Catholic Health Australia, Other, 05/03/2025

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) strongly endorses the federal government's action to ensure private health insurers provide fair funding to patients and hospitals. Health Minister Mark Butler has asked private health insurers to outline steps to increase their payout rate, which has dropped significantly in recent years while their profits have soared.

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Brennan

The Federal Government will spend \$20 million to increase the production of IV fluids in Australia, amid a global shortage. Baxter Healthcare will match the funding to expand its facility in Western Sydney. Health Minister Mark Butler says the expansion of the facility will mean more jobs and better supply of the critical medicine.

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Channel 7, Seven News, 05/03/2025, Angela Cox and Mark Ferguson

The Federal Government will spend \$20m to increase the production of IV fluids in Australia with Baxter Healthcare. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says the expansion of the facility will create 80 million units to cover Australia's high demand.

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2GB, Afternoons, 05/03/2025, Michael McLaren

Interview with Federal Health Minister Mark Butler about the Federal Government spending \$40m to increase the production of IV fluids in Australia with Baxter Healthcare. Butler says they began discussions with Baxter on expanding their manufacturing operation at Toongabbie to cover IV fluid demand and deliver more manufacturing jobs in Western Sydney.

Continuing interview on: [2GB \(Sydney\)](#).

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6PR, 08:30 News, 05/03/2025

The healthcare system will soon see an onshore increase of IV fluids, after manufacturer Baxter Healthcare announced a \$40 million investment to expand supply. Health Minister Mark Butler says it will fix the critical fluid shortage that started since 2023.

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ABC Radio Melbourne, 07:00 News, 05/03/2025

Amid a shortage, the Federal Government is spending \$20m to expand Baxter Healthcare, a local IV manufacturing facility in Western Sydney. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler notes the expansion will mean more jobs and more supplies of critical medicine.

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MINISTER WELLS

4BC, 06:00 News, 05/03/2025

Preparations are ongoing for the arrival of Tropical Cyclone Alfred, with thousands of residents setting up sandbags to safeguard their properties, but long waits are being reported. Up to 20,000 Brisbane properties will be impacted. Federal Minister for Aged Care Anika Wells states it's all hands on deck for south-east Queensland.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

NBN Central Coast, NBN News, 05/03/2025, Gavin Morris and Natasha Beyersdorf

Senior clinical psychologist Dr Nathan Beehag hopes support for mental health care will soon be more accessible following the opening of two new bulk-billed Medicare clinics at West Gosford and

Tuggerah. According to Beyond Blue, 1 in 5 Australians experience a mental illness each year, but professional support is often costly or inaccessible due to long waitlists. Assistant Minister for Mental Health Emma McBride says it is no surprise demand has been high for social workers and psychologists.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

Allergy care in country Australia has new help online

The Lockyer and Somerset Independent, General News, 06/03/2025, Allergy, Page 13

A groundbreaking new platform, believed to be the first of its kind globally, is set to transform the landscape of allergy care for rural and remote Australians. [...] Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Ged Kearney said all Australians deserve the best possible healthcare, including those living rurally or remotely.

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Australia launches first national cervical screening campaign in two decades

Mi3, Other, 05/03/2025

The Australian Government has launched a national cervical screening campaign, the first in over 20 years, with the aim of increasing cervical screening rates by promoting a new self-collect test method. This approach allows individuals to use a small swab in the vagina, offering an alternative to the traditional doctor-collected method. [...] Assistant Minister Ged Kearney MP said: "The Albanese Labor Government is determined to be the first in the world to eliminate cervical cancer, we'll get there by making sure no one is left behind."

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ASSISTANT MINISTER THWAITES

No relevant coverage

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DEPARTMENT

Women's health at risk: Katter

Cairns Post, General News, 06/03/2025, Emma Cam, Page 1

Member for Kennedy Bob Katter has slammed the federal government for putting women's lives at risk after failing to review the current Medicare rebate rates. [...] A spokesman for the Department of Health and Aged Care said workforce issues were identified as the main cause of access problems in Cairns and regional areas, following a meeting with ADIA, I-MED, and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) in early February.

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Federal government accused of neglect as Vietnam veterans found living in squalor

HelloCare, Other, 05/03/2025, Jakob Neeland

A national veterans' advocacy group has accused the federal government of neglecting South Australia's Vietnam War veterans, leaving many to live in shocking conditions without adequate support.[...] Chief executive Marc Diplock has directly criticised the My Aged Care programme – funded

by the Department of Health and Aged Care – stating that it has failed to provide proper in-home support for these veterans, many of whom suffer from severe PTSD.

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RACGP demands GP recognition in allied health strategy

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 05/03/2025, Morgan Liotta

The RACGP says general practice is a key setting for allied health professionals to work within multidisciplinary care teams. [...] The college's demand comes in response to the Department of Health and Aged Care's (DoHAC) Draft National Allied Health Workforce Strategy, which aims to shape the future of the workforce.

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Locum costs rose 65% between 2020-21 and 2023-24

The Medical Republic, Other, 05/03/2025, Laura Woodrow

Locums may be essential to the medical workforce, but we need national collaboration to find a sustainable balance with permanent doctors, finds a Department of Health and Aged Care report, as locum costs rise. The DoHAC has released an analysis of locum use in the medical workforce, based on a review by independent project consultant BDO.

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VACCINES

CMO urges vaccinators to improve uptake

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 05/03/2025, Page 1

In a letter to health professionals, Chief Medical Officer Professor Anthony Lawler expressed concern about declining influenza vaccine rates, urging vaccinators to focus on improving uptake as the flu season approaches. Last year only 26% of under-fives were vaccinated, compared to 30% in 2023, while in people aged 65 and older, uptake declined from as high as 70% in 2022 to 61%.

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Biocurious: Sometimes an effective therapy lies not just with the drug, but how it is delivered

The Australian, Other, 05/03/2025, Tim Boreham

The Nasdaq-listed Gelteq has mastered pouch delivery for people who find it difficult to swallow ASX IPO candidate Vaxxas is working on the needle-less delivery of vaccines ASX companies including LTR Pharma and Wellnex Life have devised alternative delivery products that subvert the paradigm.

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Aged care costs will overwhelm health system

Australian Financial Review, General News, 06/03/2025, John Kehoe, Page 1

The \$250 billion healthcare system will be overwhelmed by a four-fold increase in the number of people turning 80 and put extraordinary financial pressures on younger taxpayers, patients and the industry.

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Hotel trial as a halfway house for elderly

The Senior - SA, General News, 01/03/2025, Anthony Caggiano, Page 3

Bed block is a \$2 billion problem that takes away hospital beds and costs taxpayers dearly, but the South Australian government is trailing hotel stays as a solution. The predicament is an Australia-wide problem, where elderly patients are well enough to go home but are awaiting an aged care placement and, therefore, are left in limbo in a hospital bed.

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Abi's up for a chat or a game of bingo

The Senior - VIC, General News, 01/03/2025, Desiree Savage, Page 22

Inspired by those larger-than-life Pixar characters on the big screen, Abi the humanoid robot is as real as it gets, and is settling into 22 aged care homes. Almost a nod to "Rosey" the robot from 1960s cartoon The Jetsons, Abi won't be cooking or cleaning but she will be a listening ear to her new friends and chat with empathy while understanding emotion.

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Dementia Australia launches interactive tool

Community Care Review, Other, 05/03/2025

Dementia Australia has launched a free, interactive video guide that shows practical ways to make homes more dementia-friendly.

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Australians lose more money to gambling in a year than government spends on aged care, report finds

The Guardian, Other, 05/03/2025, Henry Belot

Australians are losing more money to gambling each year than the federal government spends on aged care and almost as much as it spends on the national disability insurance scheme, a new report has found.

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6PR, Drive, 05/03/2025, Oliver Peterson

Interview with WA Premier Roger Cook about the state's health system. Cook commits to a \$100m rebuild of Royal Perth Hospital and another \$100m rebuild of Midland Hospital. He states that this commitment will help finance aged care providers to provide an extra 500 aged care beds at the hospitals.

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POPULATION HEALTH

Smoking kills 66 Australians daily: Study

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 05/03/2025, Jo Roberts

Landmark research found more people are dying from smoking-related illness than first thought. What can GPs do to help patients quit?

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CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Hearty testing news

Herald Sun, General News, 06/03/2025, Robyn Riley, Page 12

A world-first study with Australian patients has confirmed a simple CT scan of the heart can help diagnose potentially deadly heart disease risk. The scan, a Coronary Artery Calcium Score (CACs),

can flag calcium, which identifies the fatty plaques that can narrow and block arteries potentially leading to heart attack and stroke.

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Stress making women sick

West Australian, General News, 06/03/2025, Lucy Caratti, Page 35

As a GP, the beginning of a new school year always sets off a new wave of stressed patients coming into my practice. This year is proving to be the same.

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The case for scanning the missing middle in heart disease

The Australian, Other, 06/03/2025, Tom Marwick

About 1.3 million adult Australians live with heart, stroke or vascular disease, a major cause of death and disability, according to the 2022 National Health Survey. Following years of falling cardiovascular disease death rates, these have increased since 2020.

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Cost-of-living blight hitting 1 in 4 women

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 06/03/2025, Jessica Wang

More than one in four women have forgone buying their medication, with pharmacists reporting increasing cases of patients scrimping on essential prescriptions for like high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma.

Research from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia conducted by Insightfully found 27 per cent of female respondents had been unable to afford a prescription in the past three years due to financial pressures, with more than one in three women (35 per cent) aged between 35 to 54 affected.

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Program: Changing Australia: Professor's mission to cure deadly childhood cancer

ABC Online, Other, 05/03/2025, Matt Dun

Professor Matt Dun didn't originally set out to be a cancer researcher. He started his professional career in the navy and finished his high school certificate as an adult at TAFE at night.

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Program: How can regional Australia tackle rising obesity rates?

ABC Online, Other, 05/03/2025, Amancay Maahs

Obesity rates in regional and rural Australia have been historically higher than in the major cities. Now, an international study warns that by 2050, one in two Australian children will be classified as overweight or obese.

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Channel 7, Seven News, 05/03/2025, Angela Cox and Mark Ferguson

Wellbeing centre MS Plus has opened in Lidcombe for people living with progressive neurological conditions like MS, Parkinson's, and MND. The NSW Government put \$16m towards the \$47m project, which also includes accessible accommodation.

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Channel 9, Nine News, 05/03/2025, Alicia Loxley and Tom Steinfort

Doctors are trialling corticosteroid injections to prevent the onset of adhesive capsulitis due to an increase in cases fuelled by diabetes as well as women with underactive thyroids and heart diseases. Macquarie University Hospital's Associate Professor Sumit Raniga says the condition's symptoms provide the same feeling as having end-stage arthritis.

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2CC, Canberra Live, 05/03/2025, Leon Delaney

More funding is being poured into research projects working to find a cure for multiple sclerosis. MS Australia Head of Research Dr Julia Morahan says they are looking to develop targeted therapies that help the brain repair itself.

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6PR, Drive, 05/03/2025, Oliver Peterson

Interview with Macular Disease Foundation Australia CEO Dr Kathy Chapman about calls for the next federal government to bulk bill sight saving injections for pensioners and save \$140m in costs yearly. Chapman says a survey of people who took these injections spent over \$6,000 a year on this treatment, which is around 12% to 20% of one's age pension. He welcomes both parties investing in more bulk billing in GPs.

Continuing interview on: [6PR \(Perth\)](#).

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ABC Radio Adelaide, Evenings, 05/03/2025, Spence Denny

Interview with Macular Disease Foundation Australia CEO Dr Kathy Chapman about making regular injections for macular degeneration more affordable. Chapman says the medication is covered under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme but there are still costs associated with that. She states a change was proposed that people who've been able to claim it through their private health insurance will no longer be able to. Chapman says the foundation has been engaging in talks with the Health Minister's office to make the treatment an outpatient procedure.

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PRIMARY CARE

Hospital waits ramp up

Newcastle Herald, General News, 06/03/2025, Damon Cronshaw, Page 1

Long waits at John Hunter Hospital's emergency department are hitting peaks for ambulances and their patients on a monthly basis, paramedics say. Elizabeth Barron, a Health Services Union delegate for the Hunter, said bed block and ambulance ramping were "happening quite frequently".

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RACGP to host national Medicare funding webinar

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 05/03/2025, Jolyon Attwooll

The RACGP is holding a webinar for members looking at the impact of recent major Medicare election commitments. The Labor Government's pledge of an \$8.5 billion funding injection into Medicare, matched the same day by the Coalition, is likely to have a far-reaching effect on general practice.

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Channel 7, Seven News, 05/03/2025, Rosanna Mangiarelli and Will Goodings

A Port Wakefield couple spent 15 hours at Lyell McEwin Hospital's emergency department waiting for urgent treatment before they were sent to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. SA Shadow Health Minister Ashton Hurn says if South Australians are presenting to a hospital in an emergency, less than 50% are seen within the clinically acceptable time frame. Premier Peter Malinauskas some emergency departments' performance often varies.

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2CC, Canberra Live, 05/03/2025, Leon Delaney

Interview with Royal Australian College of General Practitioners ACT & NSW Chair Dr Rebekah

Hoffman about the Federal Government's \$644m plan to provide another 50 urgent care Medicare clinics across the nation. Hoffman says the Federal Government is continuing to throw taxpayers' money at a solution to a problem that needs to be evaluated. She states the average service cost when going to an urgent care centre is upwards of \$200, and they would be saving money if they funded general practice to do urgent care instead.

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ABC Radio Sydney, Drive, 05/03/2025, Chris Bath

Interview with author and former MP Maree Davenport about her handbook 'The Australian Guide to Living Well with Endometriosis.' Davenport notes that for those living with endometriosis, the estimated costs are around \$30,000 a year to manage their symptoms and their medication. She states that the Federal Government recently increased the Medicare rebate under certain item numbers for investigation of endometriosis and infertility.

Continuing interview on: [ABC Radio Sydney \(Sydney\)](#).

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Young have lost hope, suicide figures show

The Australian, General News, 06/03/2025, Sarah Ison, Page 2

Nearly one in five young Australians have had suicidal distress in the past 12 months in what is being described as a "problematic trend" that has laid bare the rise of a group of people with a distinct lack of hope for the future. The data captured in Suicide Prevention Australia's latest community tracker also showed more than 70 per cent of respondents of all ages were in greater mental distress compared to this time last year, prompting a call for the next federal government to take urgent action.

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Clarity needed over release of violent crims

Sydney Morning Herald, Editorials, 06/03/2025, Page 22

The probable release of a sexual sadist held in the high-risk forensic hospital facility attached to Long Bay Prison has again focused attention on the difficulties NSW authorities encounter in monitoring the state's most dangerous. According to the Herald's Perry Duffin, the man has a history of serial rapes and violence dating back to the 1980s, including attacking a woman in front of her children while on unsupervised leave from the hospital.

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Labor commits \$135.2m to digital mental health services

The Medical Republic, Other, 05/03/2025, Cate Swannell

Free support will be available nationally, with vulnerable groups targeted. The federal government has committed \$135.2 million to its digital mental health program, splashing the cash across 12 different services to provide free support particularly for new parents, younger Australians, LGBTQIA+ people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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ABC Radio Sydney, Drive, 05/03/2025, Chris Bath

Interview with NSW Premier Chris Minns about pay disputes with railway workers, nurses, firefighters, psychiatrists and the Fair Work Commission. In relation to the nurses dispute, Minns says they are waiting for an Industrial Relations Commission arbitration after trying to broker an outcome with the NSW Nurses Union. He notes that 1100 nurses were going to be sacked because of a lack of funding by the previous government.

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

Chalmers upbeat but economists warn of shallow recovery

Australian Financial Review, Other, 05/03/2025, Michael Read

Treasurer Jim Chalmers says the Australian economy has turned a corner after the strongest GDP growth figures since the pandemic, but economists say any recovery will be shallow as long as productivity remains stuck at 2016 levels and business investment ...

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GDP grows at fastest pace since 2022

Australian Financial Review, Other, 05/03/2025, Michael Read

The Australian economy in December grew at its fastest pace since the end of the pandemic as the consumer sector recovered and state and federal government spending continued to rise. The economy expanded by 0.6 of a percentage point in the December quart...

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Australian economy grows by 1.3 per cent year-on-year, national accounts data reveals

The Courier Mail, Other, 05/03/2025, Jessica Wang

Australia's economy is strengthening, with a key metric rising for the first time in nearly two years, fresh figures show. "Greenshoots" have emerged in Australia's sluggish economy with Australia's gross domestic product rising by 0.6 per cent in the December quarter, and 1.

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

Musk thumbs nose at eSafety chief in face of damning report

The Australian, General News, 06/03/2025, Geoff Chambers and Sarah Ison, Page 7

Elon Musk's x is refusing to cooperate with the eSafety Commissioner on countering terror, violent extremism and other harmful material, sparking accusations from the online watchdog that the billionaire's social media platform is engaging in "a lawfare pattern". Ahead of releasing a report that includes warnings about AI-generated deepfakes and safety gaps across Meta, Google, Telegram and Reddit platforms, eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant launched a defence against claims she was seeking to "constrict speech".

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Time's up, tech giants

Daily Telegraph, General News, 06/03/2025, Angira Bharadwaj, Page 10

Aussies act on violence online 'without fear or favour' The eSafety Commissioner has vowed to do her

job "with no fear or favour" for US President Donald Trump's close ally and X boss Elon Musk as the federal government releases a scathing new report about the world's tech giants.

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'No fear': Prepared to fight X

Herald Sun, General News, 06/03/2025, Angira Bharadwaj, Page 5

The eSafety Commissioner vows to do her job "with no fear or favour" of US President Donald Trump's close ally and X boss Elon Musk. Commissioner Julie Inman Grant said social media and digital messaging platforms are failing to protect their users against terrorist and violent extremist content.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

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OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

Tallen Steven Hames found with drugs in his foreskin at hospital

Cairns Post, Other, 05/03/2025, SAM TURNER

Health care professionals have made a surprising discovery inside a man's body during an emergency medical procedure. A Sunshine Coast man has had his secret stash of drugs mistakenly uncovered in his foreskin during a medical procedure in hospital.

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Home Curtin University study reveals mother's cannabis use triples risk of disruptive behaviour in children

West Australian, Other, 06/03/2025, Claire Sadler

Children exposed to their mother's cannabis use during pregnancy and after birth are three times more likely to develop behavioural problems, new Curtin University research has revealed. The study, published in Psychiatry Research, analysed data from more than 222,600 Australian mothers and children revealing cannabis use during pregnancy and while breastfeeding significantly increased the risk of developing disruptive behavioural conditions.

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