



Australian Government  
Department of Health  
and Aged Care

# TODAY'S NEWS

Wednesday, 12th March 2025

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Hobart Mercury](#)** (page 3) leads coverage reporting Health Minister Mark Butler is injecting another \$156.7m into enforcement measures against the black-market tobacco trade, with the aim of seizing dealers' cash to restrict the operation of the illegal \$5 billion business.
- **[The Daily Telegraph](#)** (online) leads coverage reporting the future of private maternity units is under threat, with 18 facilities closing in the past seven years. The figures include the imminent closures in Hobart and Darwin, amid reports private maternity units may in the future only be viable in metropolitan cities on the eastern seaboard.
- **[The Australian](#)** (online) reports a Melbourne hospital is calling for clinics to lead the charge on youth mental health reform as there are moves to bridge the gap between state and federal health systems. Mental Health Assistant Minister Emma McBride says the Albanese government has invested more than \$300m this financial year to strengthen and expand headspace.
- **[The Australian Financial Review](#)** reports Victorians are most upset at their treatment by government during COVID-19, with only one in two rating the performance as "good" compared to a national average of 66 per cent. The report by the Australian Human Rights Commission warned of disproportionate effects on the Victorian community from tough restrictions, including

a lack of compassion for those with dying family members and the harsh rules imposed on residents of Melbourne's public housing towers.

- **The Hobart Mercury** (page 14) leads coverage reporting the Public Health Association of Australia is calling on the federal government to establish a national Centre for Disease Control to co-ordinate the country's response to future health emergencies. The government has committed to establishing the body by January next year, with Health Minister, Mark Butler, announcing last October that \$251.7m had been set aside for the project.
- **The Australian Financial Review** (page 14) reports Healthscope is considering selling itself after reaching a deal with creditors to defer interest payments for several months. Australia's second largest hospital operator is seeking room to find a long-term solution to its trading issues, which sees the company with debts of \$1.6 billion.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### \$5bn smokes crackdown

Hobart Mercury, General News, 12/03/2025, Page 3

Dodgy smoke dealers' cash will be seized in a crackdown on Australia's out-of-control illicit tobacco trade which has been fuelled by surging cigarette taxes. Police will be given extra resources to restrain the alleged ill-gotten gains from the nation's \$5bn addiction to cut-price black market cigarettes. Health Minister Mark Butler is doubling down on the Labor government's tobacco policy, pouring an additional \$156.7m into enforcement.

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

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### Warning 5 years on from Covid-19

Hobart Mercury, General News, 12/03/2025, Duncan Evans, Page 14

Australia remains "grossly unprepared" for future pandemics, public health experts have warned, as the world marks the five-year anniversary of Covid. The disease exploded across the world in March 2020, throwing millions of Australians into lockdown. [...] In October 2024, Health Minister Mark Butler said the commonwealth government would allocate \$251.7m to the project.

Also reported by: [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [Weekly Times Now \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Darwin\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#).

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### Labor brushes off Malcolm Turnbull's tirade of Donald Trump ahead of tariffs

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 11/03/2025, Clare Armstrong

Labor has brushed off Malcolm Turnbull's "immature" attacks on Donald Trump saying his spat with the US President will not make a "huge difference" to critical tariff talks. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said the government had been making a "strong case" to the US for a tariff carve out.

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### Father at risk of homelessness asks brutally honest question on ABC Q+A

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 11/03/2025, Chantelle Francis

An Australian father who fears one more rent increase will leave his family homeless has confronted the health minister on television about his government's immigration policies. [...] " Mr Cox's question was welcomed with applause from the audience before Federal Health Minister Mark Butler, who was on the panel, answered.

Also reported by: [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#).

## Public Health Association calls for Australian CDC on Covid five-year anniversary

NEWS.com.au, Other, 11/03/2025, Duncan Evans

It's been five years since Covid up-ended the world and threw millions of Aussies into lockdown, and experts warn we're not ready for the next one. Bereaved families and communities are coming together to mark the fifth anniversary of the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in a nationwide day of reflection. [...] In October 2024, Health Minister Mark Butler said the government would allocate \$251.7m to the project.

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## Future of private maternity in Australia under 'serious threat'

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 11/03/2025, Tamara McDonald, Ashleigh Gleeson

The future of Australia's private maternity system is "under serious threat", with 18 units closing across the country in seven years. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler last year flagged the private hospital sector was facing a number of challenges, largely because of "private pressures in the system" that could only be managed by hospitals and insurers "sitting down together and sorting it out".

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

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## AMA calls for "independent umpire" on private health system

Hospital and Healthcare, Other, 11/03/2025

AMA launched the private health chapter of its federal budget submission, calling for an independent Private Health System Authority — to provide fit-for-purpose oversight of urgent reforms and ensure the system is meeting expectations of the community. [...] "We've seen many devastating closures of private hospital services, and we are glad to see Health Minister Mark Butler this week call for a better funding deal for private hospitals to address these challenges, which we support," AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said.

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## When insurers choose, patients lose: peak bodies

MTAA.org.au, Other, 11/03/2025

Private health sector peak bodies have slammed the proposal of a "hardship package" by the corporate health insurance industry as a 'nonsense' plan that fails to address the serious viability challenges of Australia's private health system. [...] APHA CEO, Brett Helernan, said: "Federal Health Minister Mark Butler's public commitment to addressing the massive shortfall in funding by insurers, and ending their dominance in contracting over hospitals, is the core issue that is causing the viability crisis impacting hospitals, their services and, ultimately, patients.

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## Govt invests in Aus production of IV fluid to address ongoing shortages

Nursing Review, Other, 11/03/2025, Stefanie Schultz

In a bid to circumvent ongoing global supply chain issues of vital intravenous fluids, the Albanese government has announced they will invest \$20 million to ramp up local manufacturing. Baxter Healthcare production facility in Western Sydney, [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said the combined funds will expand Baxter Healthcare's capacity, creating jobs and ensuring the production of 80 million units per year from 2027.

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## DPA changes 'take doctors away from rural areas'

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 11/03/2025, Jolyon Attwooll

The Federal Government says its plan to expand Distribution Priority Areas has 'no losers', but the

RACGP Rural Chair disagrees. Surfers Paradise is one area that has newly allocated priority status. [...] Federal Health and Aged Care Minister Mark Butler said 17 areas will become more remote under new Modified Monash Model (MMM) classifications, also giving clinics access to more Medicare bulk-billing and workforce incentives.

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## Aussie father at risk of homelessness confronts government about cutting immigration rates to match housing availability as crisis deepens

Sky News Australia, Other, 11/03/2025, Sumaiya Chowdhure

An Australian father at risk of facing homelessness has confronted the government about cutting immigration rates to match housing availability as immigrants with "plenty more money" make it tougher to secure cheaper living. Morgan Cox appeared on ABC's Q+A program on Monday, revealing he currently works two jobs and one more rent increase could land his family in deep trouble. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler was the first to answer the pressing questions and claimed the government has been working "very hard" to bring immigration levels to a manageable point.

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## GPs unsure of where UCC funding comes from

The Medical Republic, Other, 11/03/2025, Holly Payne

Despite high levels of support for urgent care clinics, recent polling found GPs were unclear on where the government was finding the cash. [...] It's a figure that has since been cited by Health Minister Mark Butler, who recently announced that Labor would open another 50 of the clinics if they formed government at the upcoming election.

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## MINISTER WELLS

### Aged deserve to have respect and dignity

Daily Advertiser, General News, 12/03/2025, Finn Coleman, Page 2

When the memory support unit, Banksia wing, opened at Junee's Cooina Court, Marie Knight's mum became one of its first residents. [...] Aged Care and Sport Minister Anika Wells said aged care nurses were experts in their field and deserved to be rewarded.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

### Headspace in hospitals a national blueprint: Alfred Health

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, James Dowling

One of Victoria's most prestigious public hospitals believes clinics should lead the charge on youth mental health reform and bridging the gap between state and federal systems amid a systematic overhaul. A study by the University of Sydney in early February found leading charity headspace was "a victim of its own success", having become so overloaded with cases that only one-third of the young people using it were improving after receiving care, while the rest saw no improvement or experienced further deterioration.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

## ASSISTANT MINISTER THWAITES

### Workplace equality backlash prompts call to include men

Ballarat Courier, Other, 11/03/2025, Maeve Bannister

Strides towards gender equality could be at risk if men are not included in the conversation, with leaders urging workplaces to stay the course on diversity and inclusion initiatives. [...] Having a society where women are equal and able to fulfil their potential also benefits men, families and workplaces, Assistant Minister for Women Kate Thwaites told the summit.

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### Women make strides but there's a way to go to achieve health equality

Health Services Daily, Other, 11/03/2025, Amanda Sheppeard

The third annual national Status of Women Report Card is out. [...] Assistant Minister for Women Kate Thwaites said Australia was taking important steps forward in advancing gender equality.

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## DEPARTMENT

### NAPLAN anxiety help available

Euroa Gazette, General News, 12/03/2025, Page 12

With Victorian students sitting down to NAPLAN this week, many students and parents may be feeling stressed or worried. Parenting advocacy group Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) has provided experts to discuss test-related anxiety with families and provide positive strategies and parental support. [...] Triple P is supported by funding from the federal Department of Health and Aged Care under the Parenting Education and Support Program.

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### Experts say this popular drug is a common gateway to serious addictions

Herald Sun, Other, 11/03/2025, Mia Erickson

Cracking open a cold beer or pouring a glass of wine to toast our successes, failures and everything in between has always been a popular custom among Aussies. [...] According to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care , alcohol consumption across the country remains consistent across a range of age groups, with adults in their 50s consuming an average of 11 or more standard drinks in one drinking session.

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

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### Flexible work a top priority for public service women

The Mandarin, Other, 11/03/2025, Dan Holmes

Support for work from home arrangements has doubled in a decade, according to Community and Public Sector Union's (CPSU) 12th survey of women in the public service. [...] Large agencies ranged from 76% at the Department of Health and Aged Care to 19% at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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## Peak health bodies accuse Insurers of prioritising profit over patients

CathNews, Other, 11/03/2025, Debra Vermeer

Private health sector peak bodies have slammed the proposal of a "hardship package" by the corporate health insurance industry as a "nonsense" plan that fails to address the serious viability challenges of Australia's private health system. [...] Analysis from the independent Nous review, commissioned by the Department of Health and Aged Care, revealed savings of approximately \$290 million in medical device benefit reductions between July 2022 and June 2024, and health insurers have failed to honour their promise to pass on these savings to customers, the peak bodies said in their statement.

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## Road safety: culture vs compliance

Fleet Auto News, Other, 11/03/2025

Road safety is a pressing issue in Australia, with 1,266 road deaths and over 40,000 serious injuries recorded in 2023 (Bureau of Infrastructure, 2024). [...] However, safety extends beyond regulations; it requires a people-first approach that includes both physical and psychosocial well-being (Department of Health and Aged Care, 2023).

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## VACCINES

### How to rebuild public trust after Victoria's COVID-19 response

Australian Financial Review, General News, 12/03/2025, Greg Hunt, Page 39

Five years ago, during March and April 2020, doctors in Milan were having to choose who would receive ventilation and therefore who would live and die as Italy's health system was overwhelmed by COVID19 deaths.

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### Victorians bitter and still the angriest state over pandemic pain

Australian Financial Review, Other, 11/03/2025, Tom McIlroy

Smashed by some of the world's longest lockdowns, Victorians remain the angriest about pandemic-era public health settings, with only one in two residents of the state saying governments did a good job during COVID-19.

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### Covid five years on: how the pandemic's first 100 days reshaped Australia

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, Stephen Lunn

Five years on from the day the World Health Organisation officially declared Covid-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, it's time to acknowledge the anxiety and uncertainty we lived through in those early days and weeks. Those first 100 days of Covid led to profound social, economic and political change, some of which persists.

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### Here's what we need for the next pandemic: trust

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, Steve Robson

There is a word we should never have to utter during the next pandemic: "unprecedented". That description was used so often, by so many people, and in so many places it lost all meaning during the Covid pandemic.

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### Free RSV immunisation for NSW newborns to rollout

When little Eva Valdimarsdottir was just 14-months-old she was hospitalised with a severe and "very scary" case of RSV, but from next week all babies in NSW will be immunised against the virus before they even leave hospital.

Also reported by: [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#)

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## **Legalise Cannabis WA leader Brian Walker suggests link between vaccines and autism**

ABC Online, Other, 11/03/2025, Emma Wynne

With WA Labor set to lose its majority in the upper house, the views of crossbench MLC Brian Walker from the Legalise Cannabis party, who has suggested MMR childhood vaccinations be delayed and may cause autism, have attracted scrutiny. Dr Walker, a practising Perth GP, was first elected to the legislative council in 2021 but with the Labor government not reliant on crossbench support to pass legislation, upper house votes have attracted little attention during the last four years.

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## **Five years after COVID-19, is Australia ready for the next pandemic?**

SBS, Other, 11/03/2025

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Five years later, is Australia better prepared for the next one?

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## **ABC News, News Breakfast, 11/03/2025, James Glenday and Catherine Murphy**

A new report on the COVID pandemic has found that Federal, State and Territory governments didn't always consider or protect people's human rights in their decision making. The Australian Human Rights Commission says lives were saved, but it came at a cost.

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## **Channel 7, Seven News, 11/03/2025, Angela Cox and Mark Ferguson**

Health experts worry that Australia is not ready for another pandemic. Public Health Association of Australia CEO Terry Slevin fears Australia is less, not more, prepared for the next pandemic, warning that an influenza outbreak is just around the corner.

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## **Channel 10, 10 News First, 11/03/2025, Sandra Sully**

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park announces that newborn babies across the state will receive free RSV immunisations. RSV, which stands for respiratory syncytial virus, infects the respiratory tracts of about 90% of infants.

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## **2GB, Drive, 11/03/2025, Clinton Maynard**

Interview with NSW Health Minister Ryan Park, announcing the rollout starting next week of free RSV vaccines for newborn babies across the state. He hopes the new vaccine will prevent babies from ending up in hospital due to winter illnesses, easing the pressure in emergency departments.

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## Moving to Australia for retirement: What you need to know

The Senior, Other, 11/03/2025

Does the thought of retiring in Australia pique your interest? If so, you're definitely not alone.

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## Calvary's new housing rentals full

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 11/03/2025

In response to demand for affordable seniors housing, Calvary Health Care repurposed a retirement village and after just three days all homes have been leased. After announcing its intention to use the Sydney Williams retirement village site as affordable rentals for seniors in early February, Calvary Health Care has said it reached capacity after just three days of showing.

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## Better information management crucial in digital age

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 11/03/2025, Katarina Lloyd Jones

As more information is stored digitally the risk of cybersecurity breaches increases and Anglicare Southern Queensland chief digital officer Barry Mather has told Australian Ageing Agenda that providers need to start assessing their risk exposure. Mr Mather will discuss futureproofing organisations, essential strategies for information governance and risk management in the digital age at this week's Innovation Transforming Aged Care conference.

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## Retirement village operators need to hold \$20M to \$200M in liquidity in proposed aged care standards

The Weekly Source, Other, 11/03/2025, Ian Horswill

Retirement Living Council (RLC) executive director Daniel Gannon said upset village operators with aged care facilities are contacting him daily after The Weekly Source revealed the government's proposal to retain 10% of refundable amounts under the changes. "We've spoken to operators who would be required to hold tens of millions of dollars through these proposed changes, ranging from \$25 to \$200 million depending on the size of their holdings and portfolio mix," he said.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

### Leap in genetic testing

Daily Telegraph, General News, 12/03/2025, Julie Cross, Page 17

A world-first Australian study could pave the way for couples to have free genetic screening before starting a family. Since November 2023, potential parents have been able to claim the cost of screening for Cystic Fibrosis, Fragile X syndrome and Spinal Muscular Atrophy on Medicare.

Also reported by: [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#).

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### Our junk food future

Herald Sun, General News, 12/03/2025, Sarah Booth, Page 3

Ultra-processed food and sugary drinks will make up almost half of our diet by 2030, as Australia faces a "sharp decline" in healthy eating. The nation's top science agency has revealed our diets are on a "downward spiral" and on track to include more junk food, less fruit and consistently low levels of vegetables over the next five years.

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### Ozempic at schools



Secret playground "Ozempic clubs" are evolving as the next trend in dangerous, competitive dieting in schools, eating disorder experts warn. Butterfly Foundation spokeswoman and eating disorder coach Lexi Crouch said children are taking weight loss jabs from home that have been prescribed to a parent, or are buying highly dangerous, unregulated semaglutide medicines online.

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## Lift dole by \$18 a day, say experts

Courier Mail, General News, 12/03/2025, Jade Gailberger, Page 10

The Albanese government is under renewed pressure to boost JobSeeker and rent assistance payments, with an expert panel urging it to tackle economic disadvantage in the coming budget. [...] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data shows almost 6000 people receiving JobSeeker died by suicide between 2011 and 2021 the highest number of people in receipt of any payment.

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## Gyms pull their weight

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 12/03/2025, Page 19

Lowering exercise costs could save lives and boost the Australian economy by more than \$1bn. The research from AUSactive, the Health & Fitness Association, and Portas Consulting demonstrates how a 10 per cent reduction in gym membership costs could generate an estimated \$1.5bn in additional consumer spending.

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## Tassie has a chance to lead nation in protecting our kids from scourge of vaping

Hobart Mercury, General News, 12/03/2025, Abby Smith, Page 18

Tasmania's Public Health Amendment (Vaping) Bill 2024 was debated in the House of Assembly late last year, and the Legislative Council now has a rare opportunity to act on a nation-leading regulatory response to a dire public health issue.

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## Program: Report reveals alarming rise of homelessness in Australia

ABC Online, Other, 11/03/2025, Josh Bavas

The latest Specialist homelessness services annual report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has found the largest group who received support last year were victims of family and domestic violence. According to the report, a third of people who needed short-term accommodation went without.

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## Saying something creepy: online groomers target kids

Canberra Times, Other, 11/03/2025, Dominic Giannini

The prevalence of young people being groomed online and shocking statistics about sexual violence from dating apps have sparked calls for more action. One in five people aged between 10 and 17 have experienced signs of online grooming, and one in 10 within the last year, Claire Lister from the eSafety Commissioner said, detailing the preliminary findings of a major study.

Also reported by: [Ballarat Courier \(Online\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

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## The Australian diet in 2030 will have less fruit and more junk food

Kalgoorlie Miner, Other, 12/03/2025, Artemisia Blythe

Australians will eat more junk food and less fruit by 2030, according to new research from the CSIRO. The study revealed consumption of ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks is expected to soar by almost 20 per cent, while fruit intake is expected to drop by almost 10 per cent.

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## Microplastics hinder plant photosynthesis, study finds, threatening millions with starvation

The Guardian, Other, 11/03/2025, Damian Carrington

The pollution of the planet by microplastics is significantly cutting food supplies by damaging the ability of plants to photosynthesise, according to a new assessment. The analysis estimates that between 4% and 14% of the world's staple crops of wheat, rice and maize is being lost due to the pervasive particles.

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## 2CC, Canberra Live, 11/03/2025, Leon Delaney

Interview with Public Health Association of Australia CEO Terry Slevin, stating the need for better preparedness for future pandemics as the world marks the fifth anniversary of the World Health Organisation's declaration of the COVID pandemic. While Australia was successful in mitigating the pandemic's worst effects, Slevin warns that the same strategies may not be as effective in the future.

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## 6PR, Drive, 11/03/2025, Oliver Peterson

Interview with Public Health Association of Australia CEO Terry Slevin, stating the need for better preparedness for future pandemics as the world marks the fifth anniversary of the World Health Organisation's declaration of the COVID pandemic. While Australia was successful in mitigating the pandemic's worst effects, Slevin warns that the same strategies may not be as effective in the future.

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## CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

### Olivia Newton-John cancer legacy lives on with AI

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, Jared Lynch

Olivia Newton-John died months before artificial intelligence exploded onto the mainstream, but the cancer research institute that bears her name is now harnessing the technology to help combat the disease and potentially find a cure. The Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute in Melbourne has partnered with tech behemoth Hewlett Packard Enterprise to overhaul the "plumbing" across its vast data network to identify more effective treatments for patients.

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### 'It's upsetting': Richard Scolyer on his latest cancer diagnosis and his hopes for the future

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, Penny Timms

Professor Richard Scolyer feels "lucky" that he will be able to spend more time with his wife and family, even though he is "on the downhill route" after a devastating operation last week that revealed his brain cancer had returned and he may have only months to live.

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### 'Over-used' medical test given to millions may be causing tumors

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 11/03/2025, Alexa Lardieri

A medical test used to detect cancer may actually be contributing to the disease, research suggests. Computerized tomography (CT) scans use X-rays to create detailed images of the body and are used to diagnose and monitor diseases like cancer and bone injuries, as well as to assist in surgeries and evaluate efficacy of certain treatments.

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**Yes, you are feeling it – with chronic pain comes depression and**

## **anxiety**

The New Daily, Other, 11/03/2025, Imma Perfetto

Medical researchers are calling for changes to the treatment of chronic pain, with more routine screening for depression and anxiety among patients. It comes after a systematic review of the literature found that about 40 per cent of adults living with chronic pain also have clinical depression or anxiety.

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## **Mental health risks in chronic pain**

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 11/03/2025

About 40% of adults with chronic pain also have anxiety or depression, according to new research covering data from more than 50 countries. The research team, including experts from Australia, looked at 376 studies comprising almost 350,000 people with chronic pain around the world.

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## **New research helping young cancer survivors thrive beyond treatment**

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 11/03/2025

Australian researchers at the Prince of Wales Hospital are launching a two-year study to better understand the psychological and cognitive challenges faced by young cancer survivors aged 15-25. The research aims to provide critical insights into how survivors can successfully navigate life post-cancer treatment, reducing the risk of mental health issues and ensuring they thrive, not just survive.

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## **PRIMARY CARE**

### **Healthscope on the block after debt deal**

Australian Financial Review, Companies and Markets, 12/03/2025, Michael Smith, Page 14

Healthscope, the country's second largest hospital operator, says it will consider selling itself after reaching a deal with most of its lenders to halt interest payments for several months.

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### **One in five patients skip treatment due to costs**

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 12/03/2025, Broede Carmody and Henrietta Cook, Page 3

Up to one in five Australians have been unable to afford specialist medical appointments or recommended treatments due to rising out-of-pocket fees, according to a survey. The findings, collated by La Trobe University in Melbourne, also found 40 per cent of private hospital patients are being hit with out-of-pocket specialist fees of more than \$1000.

*Also reported by: [Age \(Melbourne\)](#).*

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### **Program: Tasmanian poppy growers happy to help in pain relief shortages**

ABC Online, Other, 11/03/2025, Tony Briscoe and Laurissa Smith

A national palliative care advocacy group is calling for more local manufacturing of pain relief medicines. Dr Peter Allcroft says it's frustrating that shortages exist when Tasmania is one of the world's largest producers of the raw narcotic material.

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### **Channel 10, 10 News First, 11/03/2025, Sandra Sully**

The costs for the new Bankstown Hospital have already exceeded its original \$1.3b funding despite construction having yet to begin. The hospital will be built on the site of an existing TAFE campus,

which Independent MLC Tania Mihailuk says will be bulldozed and integrated into the new facility.

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## **Channel 9, Nine News, 11/03/2025, Alicia Loxley and Tom Steinfort**

Public hospitals in Victoria are forced to craft new means to cut elective surgery wait times. Some allied health providers like Eastern Health work with patients early, with operations manager Louisa Ford saying it can reach a point where surgery is no longer needed. Royal Melbourne Hospital director of surgery Prof Ben Thomson says initiatives like Bone Week, where orthopaedic procedures are prioritised cut 10% off weekly surgical schedules.

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## **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION**

### **Police station death could have been prevented**

Ballarat Courier, Other, 11/03/2025, Melissa Meehan

A senior constable died alone in the disabled bathroom of the police station where he worked. A coroner has now found his death could have been avoided if he had been prevented from entering the station while he was on sick leave for mental health issues.

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### **A new Cairns mental health centre to provide essential support for free to those in crisis**

Cairns Post, Other, 11/03/2025, Emma Cam

A new, free mental health facility is set to open in Cairns with no appointment required. Telehealth services and follow-up support will also be available and the centre will connect patients to ongoing care as needed, including services for alcohol and drug support, housing, and social services.

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### **Headspace in hospitals a national blueprint: Alfred Health**

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, James Dowling

One of Victoria's most prestigious public hospitals believes clinics should lead the charge on youth mental health reform and bridging the gap between state and federal systems amid a systematic overhaul. A study by the University of Sydney in early February found leading charity headspace was "a victim of its own success", having become so overloaded with cases that only one-third of the young people using it were improving after receiving care, while the rest saw no improvement or experienced further deterioration.

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### **ABC, 7:30, 11/03/2025, Sarah Ferguson**

More than a million Australians rely on income support to get by, never more so than during a cost-of-living crisis. Three years ago, the government agreed to form an expert committee to examine those payments and report back at budget time.

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## **CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE**

### **NSW Health Minister unable to use public hospital funding to up nurse wages**

Nursing Review, Other, 11/03/2025

Using federal funding to come up with a better pay offer for NSW nurses has been ruled out, just one day after union members gathered to demand increased pay in line with other states. Members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA) gathered to demand the government direct new money to ensure nurses and midwives get fair and equal pay in line with other states, claiming the workforce was leaving for better paid jobs in the private sector and interstate.

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### More than 100 mental health workers walk off site at Barwon Health in Geelong

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 11/03/2025, Mark Murray

More than 100 mental health workers have walked off the job at Barwon Health demanding action over unfair pay, occupational violence and aggression towards staff. The industrial action took place from 1-3pm on Tuesday and was expected to severely impact operations across the Geelong hospital's mental health area, including the Swanston Centre.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#).

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### The system is burning out doctors. This is a grim prognosis for regional health

Canberra Times, Other, 11/03/2025, Tanya Forster

The healthcare system in Australia needs to hit the resuscitation button and fast. It starts with Medicare. We are living with a chronic doctor shortage that is unsustainable and it's magnified in regional parts of the country.

Also reported by: [Ballarat Courier \(Online\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Border Mail \(Online\)](#).

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### Future of private maternity in Australia under 'serious threat'

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 11/03/2025, Tamara McDonald, Ashleigh Gleeson

The future of Australia's private maternity system is "under serious threat", with 18 units closing across the country in seven years. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler last year flagged the private hospital sector was facing a number of challenges, largely because of "private pressures in the system" that could only be managed by hospitals and insurers "sitting down together and sorting it out".

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

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## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

No relevant coverage

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## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

Channel 10, 10 News First, 11/03/2025, Sharyn Ghidella

Queenslanders impacted by Cyclone Alfred can now apply for a one-off emergency hardship assistance from the State Government. Eligible residents in the Fraser Coast, Gold Coast, Logan City, Moreton Bay, and Redland City must present a driver's licence or a photo ID and a Medicare card showing members of the family. Individuals can get \$180, while families of five or more can get \$900.

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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### Neurosurgeon Charlie Teo settles civil case with WA family

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, Rhiannon Lewin

High-profile neurosurgeon Charlie Teo has settled a civil case with a Western Australian family after he claimed their sick mother may live to see her six-year-old son's 18th birthday in what a court was told was "unrealistic advice". Widower Aran Thurston and his three children were seeking damages for harm to their mental health after Dr Teo allegedly understated the outcomes of his operation.

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

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### Pushing for prevention

Hobart Mercury, General News, 12/03/2025, Elise Kaine, Page 12

It makes sense to spend on keeping people healthy As the cost of healthcare continues to go up, positive moves toward a preventive public health strategy must be matched with funding, according to the peak body for public health professionals.

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## SPORT

No relevant coverage

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

### Perth trial proves worth of Proteomics diabetes-related blood test

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 11/03/2025, James Pearson

Proteomics International's PromarkerD blood test has proven to be a step up from current tests in detecting patients at risk of diabetes-related kidney disease in a Perth-based study just published in an international peer-reviewed medical journal.

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### Victorian hospitals adjust planned surgery approach as government scrambles to reduce wait lists

9News, Other, 11/03/2025, Eleanor Wilson

The Allan government has defended the state's efforts to reduce planned surgery waitlists as strained health system continues to play catch up post-COVID. Last financial year, the state posted record-

numbers of planned surgeries operating on 209,000 patients. But the figures still fell short of the government's target by more than 30,000 surgeries.

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## Blood test boosts colorectal cancer chemotherapy precision: study

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 11/03/2025, Manisha Fernando

New Australian research has found blood tests can allow for more precision in determining treatment pathways for colon cancer. A new blood test may soon facilitate more precise selection of colorectal cancer patients for chemotherapy.

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### Independent, Indigenous-led Closing the Gap review to be held

National Indigenous Times, Other, 11/03/2025, Dechlan Brennan

The peak body for more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled bodies will host an Assembly of people with lived experience of the Closing the Gap agreement. The face-to-face gathering comes as part of a clause in the Closing the Gap agreement which calls for an independent Indigenous-led review every three years.

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## INTERIM AUSTRALIAN CDC

### Shock hospital health scare for mums and babies

Daily Telegraph, General News, 12/03/2025, Clementine Cuneo, Page 3

Hundreds of women who gave birth at Nepean Hospital have been issued an urgent warning to test for hepatitis B, after a health care worker tested positive to the infectious disease. NSW Health has begun contacting anyone who was exposed to the midwife in the birth unit of the hospital between 2013 and 2024 to alert them to the possible risk.

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### Public Health Association calls for Australian CDC on Covid five-year anniversary

The Australian, Other, 11/03/2025, Duncan Evans

Australia remains "grossly unprepared" for future pandemics, public health experts have warned, as the world marks the five-year anniversary of Covid. [...] The association wants a permanent Australian Centre for Disease Control bureaucracy to concentrate and co-ordinate the country's future responses to health emergencies.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph \(Sydney\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [Weekly Times Now \(Online\)](#).

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### Urgent warning to mothers potentially exposed to hepatitis B at a Nepean Hospital's birthing unit Urgent warning to mothers potentially exposed to hepatitis B at a Nepean Hospital's birthing unit

7news.com.au, Other, 11/03/2025, Tita Smith

NSW Health is warning hundreds of mothers who may have been exposed to hepatitis B at Sydney hospital. The alert affects about 223 women who gave birth at Nepean Hospital's Birth Unit, in the city's west, between 2013 and 2024.

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## More than 200 mothers warned after potential hepatitis B exposure at Sydney hospital

9News, Other, 11/03/2025, Josh Hohne

NSW Health has issued a health warning after it emerged that hundreds of mothers may have been exposed to hepatitis B at a Sydney hospital over a period of 11 years. It has been discovered that a healthcare worker at Nepean Hospital's Birth Unit was infectious with hepatitis B between 2013 and 2024.

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## Channel 7, Seven News, 11/03/2025, Susannah Carr and Rick Ardon

Covid-19 upended the world as we knew it. But five years on, there are grave concerns.

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## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### TGA strengthens warnings on antibiotic side effects

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 11/03/2025, Jo Roberts

Fluoroquinolone medications available in Australia will now come with stronger product warnings on potential adverse side effects. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued a safety update on fluoroquinolone antibiotics, following the strengthening of product warnings to highlight 'serious disabling and potentially irreversible' side effects.

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## OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

### Colombia urges UN to remove coca leaf from harmful substances list

The Guardian, Other, 11/03/2025

Colombia, whose president, Gustavo Petro, is a vocal critic of the US-led war on drugs, has urged the UN to remove coca – the main ingredient in cocaine – from a list of harmful substances. Used not only for cocaine, the coca leaf is also chewed as a stimulant in countries such as Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, or brewed into a tea thought to combat altitude sickness.

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## FOOD STANDARDS

### Talk from the top with Dr Sandra Cuthbert

FoodProcessing, Other, 12/03/2025

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has a long list of priorities for 2025 — including digital communication on standards, finalising energy labelling and claims on alcoholic beverages, updating definitions for gene technology, reviews on egg food safety and caffeine, surveillance of antimicrobial resistant bacteria in food, potential mandating of HSR, reviewing the NIP, toddler milk and sports food standards, and working to harmonise maximum residue limits.

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### **Channel 7, Seven News, 11/03/2025, Angela Cox and Mark Ferguson**

A first-of-its-kind study by Shake It Up Australia seeks to determine whether some household items like cleaning products, non-stick cookware, cosmetics, sunscreens, and water bottles could be linked to Parkinson's disease. University of Wollongong professor Lezanne Coi says the study aims to determine the impact of pesticides, nanoplastics, PFAS, and long-lasting chemicals on brain cells. The findings of the study are expected to be known in two years.

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### **ABC Radio Sydney, Breakfast, 11/03/2025, Craig Reucassel**

Interview with Jon Dee, Stop PFAS, about the unsafe levels of PFAS in drinking water in the Blue Mountains. Dee states they are asking for free blood testing for residents of the Blue Mountains, and they also want to get free medical treatment that enables people to reduce the PFAS levels in their blood, especially people who have very high PFAS levels.

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