



# TODAY'S NEWS

Monday, 12th January 2026

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| [Population Health](#) | [Chronic Conditions and Screening](#) |  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Australian Financial Review](#)** (page 1) reports the Federal Government is considering a benchmark pricing model for private hospitals that modelling from Private Healthcare Australia suggests could lead 560,000 people to drop their insurance and increase hospital care costs. Health Minister Mark Butler has requested major health funds resubmit proposed premium increases as the AMA notes that premiums have doubled over the past 16 years, rising significantly faster than the increase in the price of health products and services.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 1) reports that taxpayer-subsidised prescriptions for the ADHD medication Vyvanse increased by approximately 653,000 last year, causing The RANZCP to express concern about overdiagnosis, noting that while expanded access to the PBS has helped many, the use of online-only diagnostic tools may be fuelling the over-identification of the condition.
- **[The Courier Mail](#)** (online) reports the NDIA and the Federal Government are implementing the NDIS Amendment (Integrity and Safeguarding) Bill 2025 to address systemic fraud and noncompliance within the NDIS. Minister Jenny McAllister and Minister Mark Butler have highlighted that these reforms aim to reduce annual spending growth while protecting the integrity of disability supports.
- **[The Courier Mail](#)** (page 1) reports Queenslanders who are not bulk-billed now face an average out-of-pocket cost of \$48.58 per general practitioner visit, though Health Minister Mark Butler

disputed the report's figures and defended the federal government's expanded bulk billing incentives.

- **The Herald Sun** (page 13) reports that medical experts are calling for universal screening for lipoprotein (a), linked to a risk of major cardiovascular events, and which is currently not funded under the Medicare Benefits Schedule.
- **The Cairns Post** (page 1) reports Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service Chief Executive Leena Singh has identified ageing infrastructure and a surge in long-stay patients awaiting aged care or disability services as primary factors causing Cairns Hospital to operate at capacity.
- **The Toowoomba Chronicle** (page 5) reports advocacy group Maternity Consumer Network has written to the Health Ombudsman and Darling Downs Health executives following events that resulted in one infant death and another suffering brain damage.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### Warning on Labor health shake-up

Australian Financial Review, General News, 12/01/2026, Michael Smith, Page 1

Health insurers are warning of an exodus from private cover under a Labor plan to change the way private hospitals are funded, which they say will make premiums unaffordable for more than half a million people.

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### No magic pudding to cure the ills of private hospitals

Australian Financial Review, Editorials, 12/01/2026, Page 34

It took a month of intransigence before Anthony Albanese finally called a royal commission late last week into the Bondi massacre.

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

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### Patients flock to ACT bulk billing clinics

Canberra Times, General News, 12/01/2026, Steve Evans, Page 3

Patients in Canberra have switched in droves to clinics which bulk bill since the federal government introduced incentives last November. [...] All the same, Health Minister Mark Butler said he was "thrilled that since the government's landmark investment more Australians are accessing bulk billing doctors".

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### \$50 to see the doctor

Courier Mail, General News, 12/01/2026, Judith Kerr, Page 1

Queenslanders are paying almost \$50 a visit to their local doctor, with the out-of-pocket bill climbing by \$5 in the past year, new analysis shows. Queenslanders who are not bulk billed now face an average out-of-pocket cost of \$48.58 per GP visit up 12.1 per cent compared with last year, when the average charge was \$43.33. But federal Health Minister Mark Butler has rejected the figures and bulk billing incentives.

Also reported by: [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#).

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### It's bulk bill as our State still lags

West Australian, General News, 12/01/2026, Cheyanne Enciso, Page 3

New figures have laid bare just how far WA is lagging behind the rest of the country for bulkbilling, as out-of-pocket costs to see a doctor continue to rise. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler criticised Cleanbill's data, saying it should not be reported as accurate.

## Alarm over chronic care

Newcastle Herald, General News, 12/01/2026, Damon Cronshaw, Page 1

Chronic conditions cause more than 5100 deaths a year in the Hunter, a problem that is set to worsen with the ageing population. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler conceded in November that "in terms of scale, chronic disease is our big public health challenge".

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## Suburbs where 'NDIS providers outnumber cafes'

The Courier Mail, Other, 11/01/2026, Frank Chung

In some Australian suburbs, NDIS providers now "outnumber cafes". [...] In August, Mr Butler announced further overhauls to the scheme to rein in spending growth, most notably by cutting off children with mild to moderate autism and developmental delay.

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

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## WA bulk billing: State lags rest of Australia as out-of-pocket costs to see other GPs increase

West Australian, Other, 12/01/2026

Labor has spruiked the successful rollout of its bulk-billing expansion, but new figures reveal WA is still lagging the rest of the nation and out-of-pocket costs to see other GPs have gone up. Just 19.8 per cent of WA's 657 GP clinics fully bulk-bill, according to a new report from online healthcare directory Cleanbill on Monday.

Also reported by: [Countryman \(Online\)](#), [Kalgoorlie Miner \(Online\)](#).

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## Almost twice as many Australian GP clinics bulk billing since Medicare incentive changes, analysis suggests

The Guardian, Other, 12/01/2026, Melissa Davey

GP bulk-billing rates have rebounded following incentives introduced by the federal government in November, analysis by the online health directory Cleanbill shows. [...] The federal health minister, Mark Butler, said "specific data contained in the Cleanbill analysis cannot be relied upon and should not be reported as accurate".

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[Back to Top](#)

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## MINISTER MCALLISTER

### Suburbs where 'NDIS providers outnumber cafes'

The Courier Mail, Other, 11/01/2026, Frank Chung

In some Australian suburbs, NDIS providers now "outnumber cafes". [...] In August, Mr Butler announced further overhauls to the scheme to rein in spending growth, most notably by cutting off children with mild to moderate autism and developmental delay.

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[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

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No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER WHITE

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[Back to Top](#)

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[Back to Top](#)

## DEPARTMENT

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### Heatwave: why older people are at risk

Central Western Daily, General News, 12/01/2026, Aaron Bach & Fergus O'Connor, Page 12

Southeast Australia is enduring a record-breaking heatwave, with temperatures rising above 40C in many areas. For vulnerable people, particularly older Australians, this heat is not only uncomfortable but dangerous.

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### Australia's pension rules punish the poor with 60pc tax trap

Northern Territory News, Other, 11/01/2026, Noel Whittaker

Every now and then a policy is so badly designed, so completely out of touch with reality, that it deserves to be called out. The age pension income test is one of those.

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

## DISABILITY AND CARERS

### New build will raise the bar for disability accommodation

Western Advocate, General News, 12/01/2026, Rachel Chamberlain, Page 3

People with disabilities will soon have access to a new accommodation option that prioritises privacy and independence. Vivability's new group home is under construction in a growing part of Kelso and on track for completion in February 2026.

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## ABC News, Weekend Breakfast, 11/01/2026, Johanna Nicholson & Fauziah Ibrahim

The Saturday Paper reports that almost a third of participants in the NDIS whose plans have been reassessed since May last year have had their support packages cut. This comes after quarterly funding periods were introduced by default on all new and reassessed plans.

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[Back to Top](#)

## PRIMARY CARE

### Regional healthcare disparities leaving lipoedema patients without adequate care

ABC Online, Other, 11/01/2026, Anzaya Karim

About three years ago Karen Kinnersley made the gut-wrenching decision to leave her much-loved Darwin home and relocate to Victoria — a place she had left two decades prior. [...] Ms Bartlett, from Lipoedema Australia, said more research into the condition would help the charity submit an application for support from Medicare.

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[Back to Top](#)

## POPULATION HEALTH

### Population to hit 40m as we age and have fewer kids

Australian Financial Review, General News, 12/01/2026, Lea Jurkovic, Page 9

Australians are getting older and families are becoming smaller as the population is set to top 40 million people in the decades ahead.

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### The data is in: Screens put teens at risk

Australian Financial Review, General News, 12/01/2026, Ariana Eunjung Cha & Sabrina Malhi, Page 32

University of Pennsylvania researcher Ran Barzilay is a father of three. His first two children received mobile phones before they turned 12.

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### What if I didn't drink ... as much?

Australian Financial Review, General News, 12/01/2026, Lisa Jarvis, Page 34

As New Year's Eve approached, I found myself mulling over something that in all my previous adult years would have been unthinkable: What if I didn't drink?

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### Life & death battle to grow state SA in life-and-death fight

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 12/01/2026, Aden Hill, Page 1

South Australia is on track to have more deaths than births, as it grapples with an increasingly ageing population. The federal government has published its latest population modelling, which shows the nation is battling record-low birth and fertility rates.

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### Tobacco wars smoke alarm

West Australian, General News, 12/01/2026, Charlton Hart, Page 1

The Cook Government has slashed the number of inspections of potentially dodgy stores selling vapes and illegal cigarettes, The West can reveal. It comes as a tobacco war continues to spiral out of control

around the State, which has seen the likes of shootings and arson attacks in recent months.

Also reported by: [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [Kalgoorlie Miner \(Online\)](#).

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## WA durry worries need to be addressed

West Australian, General News, 12/01/2026, Katina Curtis, Page 4

Wa is losing the "improvement race" to crack down on illegal obacco and experts say long-promised new laws can't come soon enough. The State lags far behind and has only given its regulators four of the 19 tools and powers that public health and tobacco control experts say are needed.

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## Winds push bushfire smoke north, triggering air quality and health warnings for Victoria and NSW

ABC Online, Other, 11/01/2026, Doug Dingwall

People living north of Victoria's bushfires have been urged to limit their time outside to reduce their exposure to smoke, with the state's Environment Protection Authority (EPA) issuing an air quality warning. Air quality has been rated as poor on Sunday in areas throughout Victoria and New South Wales as a weather system pushes bushfire smoke north.

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## The uncomfortable truth about alcohol

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 12/01/2026, Emmanuel Kuntsche

Despite reductions in consumption, particularly among young people, Australia has seen a rise in alcohol-related harms and avoidable costs. To decrease alcohol's enormous burden on individuals, families and communities, it is important that all drinkers ease their alcohol consumption, not just heavy drinkers and other risk groups.

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## 'Bikini medicine' has marginalised women in every area of health

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 12/01/2026, Nance Haxton

A University of NSW researcher has found that despite some progress, women's health challenges in Australia are still under-researched and undertreated. The inaugural national director of UNSW's Centre for Sex & Gender Equity in Health and Medicine Professor Bronwyn Graham says narrowing women's health to 'bikini medicine' — issues that occur between the breasts and the pubic bone — has left women underserved in nearly every area of health, including disease, ageing and chronic illness.

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[Back to Top](#)

## CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

### Calls to screen for heart threat

Herald Sun, General News, 12/01/2026, Robyn Riley, Page 13

Every Australian adult should be screened for a deadly type of inherited cholesterol and, if the simple blood test is funded, experts say it would make Australia a world leader in the fight against lipoprotein (a). [...] Reporting the results of last year's trial, Professor Nicholls said high levels of LP(a) were a significant risk factor for atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, affecting more than one billion adults globally.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#).

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## Aussie bowel cancer alarm: Mystery as diagnoses rise among younger people

West Australian, Other, 11/01/2026, Angela Pownall

Once considered an old person's disease, one in nine bowel cancer cases is now diagnosed in Australians under the age of 50 -- increasing by an alarming 41 per cent over the past two decades in people in their 40s. Australia now has the highest rate of bowel cancer among people aged 25 to 49 in the world, an international study revealed late last year.

Also reported by: [Kalgoorlie Miner \(Online\)](#)

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## **The silent cancer every Aussie man needs to know about - as overall diagnoses surge 150 per cent**

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 11/01/2026, Caitlin Powell

A fit and healthy Brisbane father-of-two had no symptoms, no pain, and no warning signs until a routine check-up revealed he had prostate cancer at just 45. Matt Granfield has urged men not to delay cancer screenings after a New Year health check flagged concerning results last February.

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## **Can music be good for our brain and heart?**

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 12/01/2026, Aung Zaw Zaw Phyto & Joanne Ryan

New research shows engaging with music is linked to better cognitive function and a reduced risk of dementia and heart disease in later life. Dementia and heart disease are among the leading contributors to disease burden in Australia and worldwide.

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## **Nanoparticles in Alzheimer's disease: a new frontier in diagnosis and therapy**

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 12/01/2026, Saeed Shanehsazzadeh & Perminder Sachdev

Dementia represents one of the greatest public health challenges of our time. It encompasses a range of neurodegenerative disorders marked by progressive cognitive decline, memory loss and loss of independence.

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## **'I dismissed my "bad" period symptoms for years. Then my friend lost an organ.'**

Mamamia, Other, 11/01/2026, Anna Downes

A few months ago, I was walking through my local mall when my friend Jen\* called me out of the blue. Not for any usual reason — to debrief our mid-forties ailments, parenting debacles and perimenopausal meltdowns — but to tell me she'd had a hysterectomy.

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## **2GB, Healthy Living, 11/01/2026, Ross Walker & Ned Green**

Interview with AstraZeneca Australia and NZ president Ben McDonald. More than 10 per cent of Australians over 18 years old have signs of chronic kidney disease, but it often goes undiagnosed, with modelling from AstraZeneca showing that Australia could save \$25 billion in chronic kidney disease-related costs over the next 25 years with early action. McDonald says chronic kidney disease is a long-term condition where the kidneys gradually lose their ability to filter blood properly. He notes that it is important to detect and treat the disease early to slow the progression of the disease towards kidney failure.

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[Back to Top](#)

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION**

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## IMMUNISATION

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### Cure ills of private health

Australian Financial Review, General News, 12/01/2026, Page 1

It took a month of intransigence before Anthony Albanese finally called a royal commission late last week into the Bondi massacre.

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[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

### Reject vaccine charlatans

Launceston Examiner, General News, 12/01/2026, James Newton, Page 11

The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) has just released an article reporting a large cohort study linking maternal COVID-19 infection during pregnancy to a 29 per cent increased odds of neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism, in offspring - likely via maternal immune activation, similar to historical risks from rubella and other prenatal infections. Alarming, anti-vaccine activists twist these types of findings to perpetuate the debunked claim that childhood vaccines like MMR cause autism.

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### Could an inhaled vaccine finally eliminate tuberculosis?

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 12/01/2026, Becca Whitehead

One quarter of the global population is infected with Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb), though tuberculosis (TB) is largely eradicated in the global north. InSight+ spoke with leading Australian researchers who have found that inhaling a more virulent version of the Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine activates progenitor cells within the lungs, signalling T cells to differentiate and reside locally.

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### 2GB, Healthy Living, 11/01/2026, Ross Walker & Ned Green

Interview with haematologist and ANU Professor Mark Polizzotto. ANU researchers are testing a new drug to treat a group of cancers that are considered undruggable. Polizzotto says the trial targets MYC-driven cancers. He claims that the trial will start later this year and will unfold in two phases.

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### 2GB, Healthy Living, 11/01/2026, Ross Walker & Ned Green

Interview with Victorian Heart Institute director Professor Steve Nicholls. Scientists from the Victorian Heart Hospital alongside Monash University have successfully led the first in-human trial using a CRISPR gene therapy that may lower cholesterol and triglycerides in people with difficult-to-treat lipid disorders. Nicholls discusses the therapy, claiming that there will be more clinical trials in the next three to five years to further develop the treatment.

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[Back to Top](#)



## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

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[Back to Top](#)

## PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

### Newborn dead, baby with damage to brain

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 12/01/2026, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 5

Rare placental abruptions left one baby dead and another with brain damage in a matter of months at the Toowoomba Hospital with shock allegations the tragedies could have been prevented. These adverse maternity outcomes at Toowoomba Hospital in 2025 are among a litany of horror claims by birthing mothers in the Darling Downs region which have sparked an escalated call for an independent inquiry "that goes all the way to top executives."

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### Readers vent hospital fury

Gold Coast Bulletin, General News, 12/01/2026, Page 10

Readers have expressed fury over delays to the new Coomera Hospital as the Gold Coast continues to grapple with surging demand for health services. Hundreds expressed their dismay after a Bulletin opinion piece highlighted that the delays to the hospital now slated to open its doors in 2031 at the earliest come despite the Gold Coast being said to be "hundreds of beds short".

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[Back to Top](#)

## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Doctor, doctor: Taking city's health care to the next level

Cairns Post, General News, 12/01/2026, Arun Singh Mann, Page 1

Attracting health professionals to the Far North remains a top challenge for health bosses, with a key solution drafted but yet to receive formal commitment. [...] CHHHS chief executive Leena Singh explained the service was about 96 per cent self-reliant in the disciplines of care provided, meaning only about 4 per cent of issues could not be treated locally, but said "workforce was always a challenge".

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### Health Minister Steve Edgington confirms death in custody probe to look at custody nurse program expansion

The Courier Mail, Other, 11/01/2026, Zizi Averill & Gera Kazakov

The Health Minister has confirmed the future of the custody nurse program will be investigated following the death of a mother-of-five in the Tennant Creek watch house. [...] The Barkly representative said the current \$2.7m per year memorandum of understanding between police and NT Health provided nurses in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs watch houses, but not his hometown.

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

## Strengthening Care 4 Children: how an integrated care model can decrease pressure on hospitals and support GPs

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 12/01/2026, Harriet Hiscock, Lena Sanci, Sonia Khano & Raghu Lingam

Upskilling GPs with the support of paediatricians could reduce the number of children referred onto lengthy public hospital waiting lists, a new study has found. Australian children are struggling to get access to timely specialist care.

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

## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

### Alarm at demand for ADHD drug

The Australian, General News, 12/01/2026, Natasha Robinson, Page 1

A stimulant drug used to treat ADHD has become the fastest-growing script on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, prompting concerns that a trend of "diagnosis on demand" is driving widespread over-prescription. Vyvanse last year overtook Ozempic as the fastest-growing prescription in Australia, with almost 2.2 million scripts issued to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, the latest PBS data shows.

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### Weight-loss wonder drugs 'no substitute for exercise'

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 11/01/2026

Doctors are being urged to prescribe exercise alongside "miracle" weight-loss drugs to prevent devastating muscle and bone loss as millions more Australians gain access to the medications. [...] The warning comes as the federal government prepares to expand Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) access to weight-loss drugs, potentially opening the door for millions more Australians to use them.

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

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

## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### Diagnoses destiny dubious

West Australian, General News, 12/01/2026, Andrew Miller, Page 13

What does it mean to be human? [...] Furthermore we know doctors have standing in their professional community that they want to preserve, and we can always sue or complain to AHPRA about them.

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## The 'Super-K' flu variant is spreading in Australia. Here's what makes it 'unusual'

SBS, Other, 11/01/2026, Olivia Di Iorio

A new strain of influenza known as 'Super-K', or the subclade-K variant, could be responsible for an unusual spring and summer boost in flu cases, epidemiologists say. [...] A new report by the Australian Centre for Disease Control (ACDC) stated that subclade-K's rapid spread has the potential to put increased pressure on Australian health care services over the summer and into the 2026 influenza season.

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[Back to Top](#)

## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### 'I thought I was going to die': Perth mum's near-fatal reaction sparks immune supplement warning

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 11/01/2026, Andrew Du

Perth mother Kerry Smith thought she was doing the right thing when, feeling the early signs of a cold, she took an immune supplement she'd used before. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration has received 1365 adverse reaction reports linked to andrographis, including 859 involving ArmaForce, and 286 cases of anaphylaxis.

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[Back to Top](#)

## OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

### Warrnambool man's plea for licence return denied

Warrnambool Standard, Other, 11/01/2026, Andrew Thomson

A Warrnambool district man previously banned from driving after being caught with cannabis in his system has been told to get more information while applying to get his licence back. [...] However, it's understood that patients using medicinal cannabis can lawfully drive, provided they are not impaired by side effects, such as drowsiness or fatigue.

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[Back to Top](#)

## FOOD STANDARDS

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## AICIS

### Toxic industrial legacy lingers

Newcastle Herald, General News, 12/01/2026, Matthew Kelly, Page 8

High levels of toxic contaminants remain in public and private properties across the Lower Hunter almost a decade after two studies identified their potential risks to those who are exposed to them. While significant attention and resources have been directed to the remediation of former service sites and similar lands listed on the state's contaminated lands register, relatively little has been done to address the impact of diffuse contamination that occurred over the best part of last century.

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