



# TODAY'S NEWS

Tuesday, 17th February 2026

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- [Royal Australian College of General Practitioners](#) (online) reports that Health Minister Mark Butler said the proposed health legislation could allow GPs' fees and bulk-billing rates to be published in the Medical Costs Finder website in the future, beyond non-GP specialist fees and private health insurance costs. RACGP President Dr Michael Wright said he supports transparency and noted the RACGP standards already encourage practices to disclose fees.
- [The Australian](#) (page 3) reports a Cochrane research found that intermittent fasting had no significant weight-loss benefit, while Adelaide University group leader of obesity and metabolism, Leonie Heilbronn, said the findings were limited as it combined different forms of intermittent fasting and they are not equivalent.
- [The Daily Telegraph](#) (page 2) reports that Australia has recorded its highest whooping cough rates in 30 years, with almost 800 cases per 100,000 children in 2024-25, and 54,000 infections reported by the Australian Centre for Disease Control, due to declining vaccination rates and epidemic peaks.
- [The Adelaide Advertiser](#) (page 5) reports that nurses at Lyell McEwin Hospital, excluding those in the emergency department and intensive care units, will hold a 24-hour strike from Thursday morning after rejecting the state's proposed 11.1 per cent pay rise over three years.

- [The Sydney Morning Herald](#) (online) reports the Queensland Ambulance Service Clinical Hub has been upgraded with now more than 140 staff and around-the-clock care, assisting Triple Zero callers who don't need urgent emergency response.
- [The Daily Telegraph](#) (online) reports that NSW has confirmed two more cases of measles, warning of an increased risk and advising people to check the NSW Health website for the list of exposure sites and to monitor symptoms.
- [The Canberra Times](#) (online) reports that AstraZeneca secured a Federal Court injunction preventing Pharmacor from selling and listing two generic versions of AstraZeneca's diabetes drug, Forxiga, on the PBS.
- [The Daily Aus](#) (online) leads coverage reporting that Assistant Health Minister Rebecca White said the government proposed to require Health Star Ratings on all food products to improve consumer choices.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### Specialist fees are soaring, forcing the government to act

Newcastle Herald, General News, 17/02/2026, Damon Cronshaw, Page 7

Rising out-of-pocket costs for medical appointments with specialists have prompted calls for greater equity in the Hunter Region's health system. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said the government had wanted specialists to "voluntarily publish" their fees.

[Read Plain Text](#) [Read More](#)

### Queensland school teacher calls for endometriosis support after fundraising for surgery

ABC Online, Other, 16/02/2026, Katrina Beavan

There are days when Inez Goves is too unwell to stand in the shower long enough to wash her hair. [...] A spokesperson for Health Minister Mark Butler promised it would open "within weeks".

[Read More](#)

### Plan to publish GP fees and bulk-billing rates by end of 2026

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 16/02/2026, Jolyon Attwooll

Fees and bulk-billing rates could be listed by default on a revamped Medical Costs Finder website by the end of the year, according to proposed new laws – which also includes several specific references to general practice. [...] Federal Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler has long flagged a crackdown on non-GP specialist fees. In a pledge before last year's Federal Election, he promised an upgrade to the Medical Costs Finder, which was set up to provide transparency on the costs of specialist consultations and services.

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### Pertussis case surge 'a very big concern'

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Other, 16/02/2026

As cases of whooping cough reach their highest levels in Australia in 35 years, the Federal Health Minister admits 'we have a big job ahead of us' in reining in the numbers. [...] RACGP President Dr Michael Wright and Federal Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler have now both expressed deep concerns over the surge in the potentially fatal infection, and the global increase in broader vaccine hesitancy.

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### Government forces health cost transparency

Aged Care Inside, Other, 16/02/2026, Stefanie Schultz

The Albanese government has introduced landmark legislation aimed at providing Australians with greater transparency and value when seeking specialist medical advice and treatment. [...] Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler, announced the introduction of the Health Legislation Amendment

(Improving Choice and Transparency for Private Health Consumers) Bill 2026 , noting the urgent need for reform.

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## Minister confirms PBS listing for new cystic fibrosis therapy and funded access to other medicines

BioPharmaDispatch, Other, 16/02/2026

Health Minister Mark Butler has confirmed that the Albanese Government has approved new and expanded Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme listings to improve access to treatments for Australians living with cystic fibrosis, chronic kidney disease, and psoriasis.

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## Unpacking the Thriving Kids model

Team Dsc, Other, 16/02/2026

It had been rather silent on the Thriving Kids front since NDIS Minister Mark Butler's Press Club address last August. Behind the scenes, we know the federal government and states and territories were busy quarrelling and secretly leaking to the media about the program they are meant to jointly deliver.

[Read More](#)

## Channel 7, Seven News WA at 4pm, 16/02/2026, Amelia Broun

Australians now enter retirement living at an average age of 75, and more than 2m people already fall into that age group, according to the Retirement Living Council. Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler warns Australia must open a new aged care facility every three days for the next 20 years, while retirement communities offer one way to ease the strain.

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## 2CC, 09:00 News, 16/02/2026

Australians with cystic fibrosis will now have more affordable access to a new medication, which usually costs about \$250,000 a year. Health Minister Mark Butler says this will be life-changing for them.

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## MINISTER MCALLISTER

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## The government wants to make Health Star Ratings mandatory

The Daily Aus, Other, 16/02/2026

The Federal Government will push for all food products to have mandatory Health Star Ratings (HSR). [...] Assistant Health Minister Rebecca White is advocating for all food products to be rated "to enhance consumer choice."

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## The Zap: a big news week for health and aged care, plus key consultations and inquiries

Croakey, Other, 16/02/2026, Melissa Sweet

Next steps towards mandatory health star ratings of foods, Closing the Gap announcements and commentary, and transparency around medical fees are among the topics featured this week. [...] Early in the week Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Rebecca White announced that the Government would "raise a proposal at [last Friday's] Food Ministers Meeting to mandate health star ratings on food products across Australia".

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## Health Star ratings could soon be compulsory for all packaged foods

Body And Soul, Other, 16/02/2026, Sarah Mitchell

The controversial Health Star Ratings could soon be compulsory on all food packaging after a push from Australia's health ministers. Here's everything you need to know. [...] Assistant Health and Aged Care Minister Rebecca White announced the push for the display of the ratings to be compulsory on all food products to make it easier for shoppers to compare items.

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## SPECIAL ENVOY REPACHOLI

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## DEPARTMENT

### Politicians read The Weekly Source – here's proof

The Weekly Source, Other, 16/02/2026, Caroline Egan

When politicians are preparing to scrutinise the Government's aged care reforms at Senate Estimates, where do they turn? [...] After checking his notes, Daen Dorazio, First Assistant Secretary Residential Aged Care Division at the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, replied: "Yes Senator, I can confirm that is correct."

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### Dementia care: new action framework

Aged Care Insite, Other, 16/02/2026, Stefanie Schultz

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has released its National Dementia Action Plan framework, signalling a period of practical changes, particularly in how dementia is diagnosed and post-diagnostic care is delivered. The Collective Priority Framework 2025–2027 (CPF) is the first of three such documents planned over the 10-year lifespan of the National Dementia Action Plan.

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### Cut spinal cord stimulator benefits, says DoHDA

The Medical Republic, Other, 16/02/2026, Holly Payne

Spinal cord stimulators are the subject of yet another health department review, with the latest recommendation being to reduce private health benefits for neurostimulator implantable pulse generators (IPGs) by 43%. The medical devices were added to the Prescribed List – the document which specifies the minimum benefit that a health insurer must pay for a certain device or product – without being assessed by the Medical Services Advisory Committee or the Medical Devices and Human Tissue Advisory Committee.

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## Where are all the skin cancer clinicians in Queensland?

The Medical Republic, Other, 16/02/2026, Lincoln Tracy

Queenslanders living outside the southeast region have limited access to specialist dermatology services, leaving GPs to shoulder the skin cancer burden. [...] Despite the ever-increasing need for skin cancer clinicians, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has previously predicted that Australia will be 90 full time dermatologists short of where the workforce should be by 2030.

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## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### Sector 'definitely not ready' for CHSP transition

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 16/02/2026, Katarina Lloyd Jones

Speaking at Monday's Senate inquiry hearing into the Commonwealth Home Support Program's move to the Support at Home program, aged care peak body chief Tom Symondson was clear that the sector was not ready to transition home care into a single program. "We are definitely not ready," the chief executive officer of Ageing Australia said.

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### Home care profit margins remain inadequate

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 16/02/2026, Katarina Lloyd Jones

The home care sector saw relatively positive results in the StewartBrown September 2025 Aged Care Performance Survey Analysis, with an operating profit of \$4.70 per client per day for the July-September quarter, up from \$3.77 per client per day in the financial year ending June 2025. Revenue utilisation also increased from 88.2 per cent to 89.6 per cent – which StewartBrown senior partner Grant Corderoy attributed to providers putting their prices up in preparation for the introduction of the Support at Home program.

Also reported by: [Community Care Review \(Online\)](#).

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### Culturally connected care: Creating meaningful moments for residents at risk of isolation

HelloCare, Other, 16/02/2026, Jakob Neeland

In aged care, safety and compliance matter deeply. But so do culture, identity and connection. At Hope Aged Care in the heart of Brunswick, these elements recently came together in a powerful way through a partnership between BESTMED and Connect the 40%.

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### The silent mental health cost of leading through Support at Home reform

HelloCare, Other, 16/02/2026, Jakob Neeland

There is a conversation our sector is not having loudly enough. Behind every Approved Provider navigating the transition to Support at Home are leadership teams carrying an extraordinary and sustained load.

## Age Pension boosts \$22 to \$40: Check if you qualify today

Your Life Choices, Other, 16/02/2026, Lexanne Garcia

Mark your calendars, folks—20 March is a date every Age Pension recipient should have circled in red. That's when the government's twice-yearly pension indexation kicks in, and your payment could get a much-needed boost.

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## DISABILITY AND CARERS

### Banned NDIS operator 'hit rock bottom'

Border Mail, General News, 17/02/2026, Page 7

A border ndis operator hit rock bottom with his drug use and continues to receive treatment after moving from the area, the Wodonga court has heard. Darren Harris, who ran Indigeekare Services in Wodonga, was charged with drug, testosterone and weapon offences in October 2024 following a car search.

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### ABC Radio Darwin , Breakfast, 16/02/2026, Jess Ong

NDIS Minister Jenny McAllister has ordered an urgent investigation into reports of "dodgy" providers in the Northern Territory using cigarettes, food, and mobile phones as inducements to recruit and retain First Nations residents. Acknowledging the "predatory" nature of these high-pressure sales tactics in remote communities, the Minister has directed the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to double-check compliance and crack down on unscrupulous operators who are allegedly draining participant plans for profit.

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## PRIMARY CARE

### Ribbon cut for Burnie's Medicare Urgent Care Clinic

Burnie Advocate, General News, 17/02/2026, Sarah Fittock, Page 5

The ribbon of Burnie's Medicare Urgent Care Clinic has officially been cut. The clinic, located at the former UTAS campus on Mooreville Road, began accepting patients on February 9.

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### Calling 000 but don't need an ambulance? Your call may end up here

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 17/02/2026, Courtney Kruk

Nearly half of all triple-zero calls for an ambulance do not require an emergency response, staff say, as an expanded team of operators moves into new offices on Brisbane's northside. About 3800 calls are made to Triple Zero each day, with about 1800 diverted to the Queensland Ambulance Service Clinical Hub, housed at the Emergency Services Complex in Kedron.

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### Doctors demand evidence of scope safety

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 16/02/2026

The Royal Australian College GPs (RACGP) has called for "guardrails to protect patient safety", following a Western Australia Government announcement that a further 40 pharmacists will start prescriber training this month as part of the Enhanced Access Community Pharmacy Pilot (PD 08 Aug 2025), adding to the 50 already training. RACGP WA chair Dr Ramya Raman said reforms must strike

the right balance between improving access and ensuring quality patient care, and WA must demonstrate that the pilot is safe before expanding training to more pharmacists.

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## 2CC, Breakfast, 16/02/2026, Stephen Cenatiempo

Interview with Dr Michael Wright, President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Compere mentions that in the ACT, GPs will now be able to prescribe ADHD medicines without specialist referrals. Wright says ADHD medications is quite complex, so it's not just some medications that specialists need to be involved with. He states that there's still the capacity of GPs to work with ADHD specialists when they need to.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

### Crime wave prompts WA tobacco crackdown

Australian Financial Review, General News, 17/02/2026, Tom Rabe, Page 9

A crackdown on illegal tobacco in Western Australia triggered by a spate of fire bombings and robberies will include multimillion-dollar fines and prison terms of up to 15 years.

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

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### Call to slash the price of cigarettes

Age, General News, 17/02/2026, Shane Wright, Page 3

One of the nation's biggest independent retailers has warned that nine out of every 10 cigarettes will be bought illegally by the end of the decade unless the federal government cuts tobacco excise, slashing the price of cigarettes by almost a third. Ritchies IGA, which has 150 stores mostly across Victoria and NSW, says Treasurer Jim Chalmers could boost the budget by billions of dollars and undermine criminal gangs by reversing years of bipartisan support for everhigher rates of tobacco excise.

Also reported by: [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#).

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### 'Big vitamin' is coming for your children

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 17/02/2026, Lauren Ironmonger, Page 14

Parents want the best for their kids, and when it comes to nutrition, vitamins can sometimes feel like a simple fix. While children's supplements are nothing new, increasingly they are being marketed towards healthy kids, mimicking the wellness rhetoric of similar products targeting adults.

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### Mystery of chromosome loss that shortens male lifespan

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 17/02/2026, Jenny Graves, Page 20

Men tend to lose the Y chromosome from their cells as they age. But because the Y bears few genes other than for male determination, it was thought this loss would not affect health.

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

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### Devil still in details of smoke laws

West Australian, General News, 17/02/2026, Charlton Hart, Page 12

New illicit tobacco laws promising hefty fines and jail terms are raising more questions than answers with the Cook Government struggling to give details on how they will work. Under the reforms to the Tobacco Products Control Act announced by Roger Cook, a new offence of possession of a large commercial quantity of illicit tobacco will be established.

## Chiropractor sues Sydney council after fall on pedestrian studs ends 40-year career

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 16/02/2026, Georgia Palgan

One slip. That's all it took to forever change a life and a 40-year career. [...] Falls are Australia's leading cause of injury hospitalisations, costing the health system over \$5 billion in 2023-24, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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

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## Experts push for mandatory Health Star Rating system across Australia

Yahoo! News Australia, Other, 16/02/2026

As Australia faces a public health crisis, experts are pushing for a major shakeup to make choosing healthier products easier. A YouGov survey found nearly three-quarters of shoppers said they usually check health food labels, though sixty-five percent admitted the current labels are confusing or hard to understand.

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## Channel 10, 10 News, 16/02/2026, Natalie Forrest

WA introduces tough new laws to target illicit tobacco and vape sales, giving the state some of the strongest penalties in Australia. An audit by the Australian Council on Smoking and Health finds nearly half of Perth's convenience stores sell illegal products, with over a third located within a kilometre of a school, and none checking ID.

Report continues on: [Channel 10 \(Perth\)](#).

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## ABC Radio Darwin , Drive, 16/02/2026, Adam Steer

Interview with Prof Luigi Fontana, physician scientist at the University of Sydney, about intermittent fasting and the 5:2 diet evidence. Fontana says research across multiple studies shows the 5:2 approach helps with weight and fat loss, but does not reduce inflammation markers or improve glucose, insulin, blood pressure, or oxidative stress. He adds that popular momentum for the diet grows after media promotion by Michael Mosley, while strong human data on broader health benefits remains limited.

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## ABC Radio Hobart, Statewide Mornings, 16/02/2026, Leon Compton

Interview with Joe O'Malley, Tas Branch President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, about filling interstate prescriptions in Tasmania. O'Malley explains that Tas pharmacies couldn't legally dispense prescriptions from other states, leaving patients and pharmacists in difficult situations, especially for time-sensitive medications like pain or ADHD treatments. He says government's new announcement will allow interstate prescriptions to be filled in Tas, improving access and reducing delays for patients.

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## ABC Radio Perth, Statewide Mornings, 16/02/2026, Nadia Mitsoupoulos

Interview with Laura Hunter, CEO of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health, about new legislation imposing tougher penalties for the illicit tobacco and vape trade. Hunter says the record fines and 90-day shutdown orders target organised crime by hitting profits and unlawful retailers, correcting previous weak enforcement. She emphasises that effective implementation and visible store closures will make a real difference in disrupting illegal trade.

Interview continues on: [ABC Radio Perth \(Perth\)](#).

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## CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

### Genetic solution for tackling high rates of cholesterol

The Australian, General News, 17/02/2026, Page 7

Scientists are testing a new way to fight heart disease: a gene-editing treatment that might offer a one-time fix for high cholesterol. It's very early stage research, tried in only a few dozen people, but gene-editing approaches being developed by two companies show hints that switching off certain genes could dramatically lower artery-clogging cholesterol, raising hopes of one day being able to prevent heart attacks without having to take pills.

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### Bella's rare battle to stay alive

Herald Sun, General News, 17/02/2026, Robyn Riley, Page 9

Bella Grambau has been told she is the only person in Australia and one of only a handful of people in the world with a rare variation of Cowden syndrome. In theory, it is a nasty genetic disorder that causes mutations to the PTEN gene; in reality it puts her at a high risk of developing multiple cancers for the rest of her life.

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

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### Telling the tooth on oral hygiene

Herald Sun, General News, 17/02/2026, Page 15

Taking better care of your teeth and gums can lower the risk of developing more than 50 conditions and diseases, including dementia and arthritis, medical experts say. Experts recommended brushing your teeth up to three times a day to maintain oral hygiene and warned that those who did not exacerbated the risk of developing harmful conditions, including in their brains and joints.

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

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### Misdiagnosis agony

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 17/02/2026, Evangeline Polymeneas, Page 14

Carmen Morgan had been experiencing bloating and pain for two years before she was eventually forced to go to a hospital emergency department. "My stomach kept getting bigger," the 42-year-old said.

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### NT MLA Tanzil Rahman accused of bullying two female staffers on VAD committee

ABC Online, Other, 16/02/2026, Exclusive by Matt Garrick

A Northern Territory politician has been accused of bullying by two female staffers in what's been described as "a very serious matter", the ABC can reveal. Member for Fong Lim, Tanzil Rahman, was the chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs committee, which was leading consultations into the NT's Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) laws when the formal complaints were made late last year.

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### TWC launches women's health focus

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 16/02/2026

Terrywhite Chemmart (TWC) today launched a new national women's health focus, positioning its community pharmacists as a trusted frontline destination for women's health care. The initiative integrates existing pharmacist-led women's services under a unified national framework, supported by private CareClinic consultation spaces (pictured) and a digital booking system.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

### Research links victims of sexual trauma to visual hallucinations

The Australian, General News, 17/02/2026, James Dowling, Page 7

Australian researchers have established a unique and clear link between sexual violence trauma and visual hallucinations, in a breakthrough for understanding psychotic disorders. Swinburne University cognitive neuropsychologist Susan Rossell was part of a team of researchers investigating the sensory hallucinations of 66 people with psychotic disorders, tracking how forms of trauma in childhood and adulthood correlated to laterlife sensory symptoms.

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### Mental health lesson plan

Herald Sun, General News, 17/02/2026, Amelia Swan, Page 13

Every Victorian state primary school will get access to a dedicated mental health and wellbeing leader under a massive statewide push to tackle rising rates of child mental ill health. The Mental Health in Primary Schools initiative embeds a trained mental health and wellbeing leader in each campus to upskill staff to spot early warning signs and connect families with specialist services.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#).

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### 'Value for money': Mental health experts have a plan to save teens from anxiety and depression – but it'll cost \$1bn a year

Adelaide Now, Other, 16/02/2026, Mary Papadakis

Dakota was just nine when she started thinking the world might be better without her in it. Tilly was in year 3 when the stress and anxiety hit, leaving her struggling to cope.

Also reported by: [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#).

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### Supporting quality use of antidepressants in adolescents

Australian Pharmacist, Other, 16/02/2026, Chloe Hava

Early monitoring, sensitive communication and guideline awareness are essential when medicines are used to manage youth mental health. Almost two in five (around 40%) of Australians aged 16–24 years experience a mental disorder in any given year, with depression and anxiety frequently emerging during adolescence and early adulthood.

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## IMMUNISATION

### ABC Radio Hobart, Drive, 16/02/2026, Lucy Breden

Interview with Dr Shannon Melody, Specialist Medical Advisor at the Department of Health Tasmania, about rising whooping cough cases in Tasmania. Melody says Tas is experiencing increased whooping cough activity due to waning immunity and a gradual decline in childhood vaccination since 2020, with coverage around 94% for key age groups. She stresses the importance of vaccination for infants, pregnant people, and adolescents.

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### ACL pathology slump raises fears for Healius

The Australian, Business News, 17/02/2026, Bridget Carter, Page 14

Australian Clinical Labs results on Monday do not bode well for rival Healius, which reports later this week. Shares in ACL closed down more than 7 per cent after pathology volumes were lower than expected.

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

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

### 'Fasting? You may as well do nothing'

The Australian, General News, 17/02/2026, Stephen Lunn, Page 3

Intermittent fasting is unlikely to lead to greater weight loss for overweight or obese adults than traditional diets, or even doing nothing, new research finds. A review of 22 clinical trials involving almost 2000 people, including some from Australia, examined a range of intermittent fasting types including periodic fasting, alternate day fasting and time-restricted feeding to reach the conclusion it offered no meaningful effect on weight loss beyond a normal diet or carrying on as usual.

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

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### Genetic test in the works

West Australian, General News, 17/02/2026, Page 7

Scientists have made a breakthrough towards a genetic test that could help thousands of mothers with epilepsy safely take lifesaving medication without fear of it causing birth defects in their children. Valproic acid is an antiseizure medication, and for many people with epilepsy it is the only treatment or the most effective.

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### Epilepsy test breakthrough

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 17/02/2026, Page 2

Monash University scientists have made a breakthrough towards a genetic test that could help thousands of mothers with epilepsy safely take lifesaving medication without fear of it causing birth defects in their children. The use of antiseizure medication Valproic acid (VPA) has been restricted because about 10 per cent of babies born to mothers who take VPA during pregnancy have a structural birth defect.

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### Intermittent fasting no better than dieting, study finds

Australian Financial Review, Other, 16/02/2026, Michael Peel

Popular way-to-lose-weight offers no special effects beyond restricting overall calories, scientists say. Overweight people who fast intermittently lose no more body mass than those who follow traditional diets that involve eating less each day.

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### 'Biological clock': Men's fertility truth revealed

Adelaide Now, Other, 16/02/2026, Erin Christie

While the "biological clock" is usually associated with women, new national guidelines are showing it exists for men, too. All women who hope to have children know they have a time limit — age is linked

to the decline in eggs and fertility.

Also reported by: [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#).

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## Benefits of intermittent fasting 'fail to match the hype', major review finds

ABC Online, Other, 16/02/2026, Caitlyn Davey

Intermittent fasting has become a popular phrase in dieting, promising to boost metabolism, shed body fat, and even help reduce the risk of diabetes, hypertension and obesity. From the 5:2 diet to the eight-hour feeding window, it has become a hot topic for researchers to study and internet personalities to promote.

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## Intermittent fasting no better than typical weight loss diets, study finds

The Guardian, Other, 16/02/2026, Ian Sample

Intermittent fasting is no better for shedding the pounds than conventional diets and is barely more effective than doing nothing, according to a major review of the scientific evidence. Researchers analysed data from 22 global studies and found people who are overweight or living with obesity lost as much weight by following traditional dietary advice as when they tried fasting regimes such as the 5:2 diet popularised by the late Michael Mosley.

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### Katherine West Health Board backs greater urgency, more action to implement Coroner's domestic violence recommendations

National Indigenous Times, Other, 16/02/2026, Giovanni Torre

The Katherine West Health Board has welcomed the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory's report card assessing progress made against the Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of four Aboriginal women killed by their partners, and the 35 recommendations made to address domestic and family violence rates and deaths in the NT. KWHB is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation providing clinical, preventative and emergency health services across the remote western region of Katherine in the Territory.

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## PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

### 'People fixate on light rail': warning from IMF dismissed

Canberra Times, General News, 17/02/2026, Lucinda Garbutt-Young & Dana Daniel, Page 11

The Barr government has hosed down concerns the territory's soaring debt puts it at risk of needing a Commonwealth bailout - and that rising spending on infrastructure and healthcare could damage Australia's credit rating. [...] "People fixate on light rail. Health is actually the biggest pressure ... Infrastructure can be delayed. You can delay big projects, but for health and education, you can't."

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### Finally, construction starts on new hospital

Daily Telegraph, General News, 17/02/2026, James O'Doherty, Page 6

Sydney's booming north west will have a new hospital by the end of the decade, with construction

finally starting on the billion dollar Rouse Hill Hospital after 10 years of delays and broken promises. The long-promised project will deliver a full-service hospital for one of Sydney's fastest growing areas.

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## Mildura ambulance times top the state

Sunraysia Daily, General News, 17/02/2026, Lochlainn Heley, Page 4

Mildura Ambulance paramedics recently took the top spot in the state for urban centre response times, attending to 89.9 per cent of code one patients within 15 minutes. Data for the most recent October to December quarter saw Ambulance Victoria crews hold relatively steady in their response times under 15 minutes, growing from 64.1 per cent in the previous quarter to 65.1 per cent of cases recently.

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## Ways to take pressure off health system

Launceston Examiner, General News, 17/02/2026, Vanessa Cahoon, Page 12

Tasmania has been handed an extraordinary opportunity. Under the revised National Health Reform Agreement, our state is set to receive approximately \$700 million in additional Commonwealth hospital funding over the next five years. At a time when emergency departments are under pressure, ambulance ramping dominates headlines and workforce shortages challenge our hospitals daily, this funding is both welcome and necessary.

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## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Pay-war nurses vote to strike

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 17/02/2026, Brad Crouch, Page 5

Nurses will strike for 24 hours from 7am on Thursday at the Lyell McEwin Hospital as their long-running pay dispute drags on. The move follows marches and rallies that have failed to satisfactorily increase the state government's offer during negotiations.

*Also reported by: [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Townsville Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#).*

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### Nurses losing patience on wages

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 17/02/2026, Brad Crouch, Page 15

Irate nurses have revealed horror stories in the aftermath of a series of Advertiser exclusives on health system failures. Revelations the Royal Adelaide Hospital has instituted "corridor care" to free up emergency department beds, rising catastrophic medication errors in SA hospitals and that senior public hospital doctors can now claim about \$1000 a day in overtime under a pay deal clause have prompted nurses to come forward.

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### Medical milestones

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 17/02/2026, Natalie Croxon, Page 1

Dr Tanya Selak didn't know about anaesthetists before she went to medical school, but now the Wollongong doctor is heading up the profession's national body. Dr Selak, a consultant anaesthetist

who works in local public and private hospitals, is president-elect of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA).

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## **Nick Bruining: Can Fringe Benefit Tax benefits for not-for-profits solve the looming aged care staff crisis?**

Kalgoorlie Miner, Other, 16/02/2026

A new study conducted by research house Informed Decisions has revealed a looming shortage of aged care staff, as Australia's ageing population continues to grow. Confusing differences in pay arrangements could also become a factor, with not-for-profit employees potentially thousands of dollars better off compared to their for-profit counterparts.

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## **Registration numbers top 42k for first time**

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 16/02/2026, Bev Baxter

The number of pharmacists holding registration with the Pharmacy Board of Australia is continuing to rise with the latest figures showing a record 42,159 are currently registered.

[Read More](#)

## **Guild to launch first pharmacy owner census since 2012**

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 16/02/2026

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia is set to launch its first member census for more than a decade, giving every pharmacy owner the opportunity to share the realities of their business, team and future ambitions. The census aims to create a comprehensive picture of today's community pharmacy sector, helping to ensure planning, advocacy, support and member services reflect the real operating environment facing pharmacy owners today.

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## **Channel 9, Nine News, 16/02/2026, Brenton Ragless**

SA nurses plan unprecedented strike action with a 24-hour walk-off starting 7am Thursday at Lyell McEwin Hospital after pay talks with the government stalled for nearly 11 months. Nurses reject an offer of an 11.15% pay rise compounded over three years and move to protest outside the hospital.

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## **ABC Radio Darwin , Morning Show, 16/02/2026, Lara Stimpson**

Interview with Joe O'Malley, Tas Branch President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, about filling interstate prescriptions in Tasmania. O'Malley explains that until now, Tas pharmacies couldn't legally dispense prescriptions from other states, leaving patients and pharmacists in difficult situations, especially for time-sensitive medications like pain or ADHD treatments. He says government's new announcement will allow interstate prescriptions to be filled in Tas, improving access and reducing delays for patients.

[Play Now](#)

## **2CC, Canberra Live, 16/02/2026, Leon Delaney**

Canberra welcomes 339 new public health graduates, including nurses, midwives, junior medical interns, and allied health professionals, with more joining later in 2026. Health Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith says they will strengthen the territory's growing public health workforce.

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## Cheaper diabetes drug halted by AstraZeneca court win

Canberra Times, Other, 16/02/2026, Miklos Bolza

Consumer hopes for a version of AstraZeneca's blockbuster diabetes drug Forxiga that doesn't hit hip pockets as hard have been dented by a court win to the pharma giant. [...] On Monday, AstraZeneca successfully blocked its local rival from listing two of those products on the government-run Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme - a move that was expected to be finalised from April 1, 2026.

Also reported by: [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [Kalgoorlie Miner \(Online\)](#), [Warrnambool Standard \(Online\)](#), [Ballarat Courier \(Online\)](#), [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [Yahoo! News Australia \(Online\)](#).

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## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### Penile injection checks too soft

Courier Mail, General News, 17/02/2026, Tamara McDonald, Page 10

Men face permanent damage and invasive surgery from injecting their penises to try to boost sexual performance, amid concerns the powerful drugs are alarmingly easy to obtain over telehealth. One man who misused the medication has shared the "catastrophic" results, while an undercover investigation by The Courier-Mail found a telehealth provider indicated it was willing to provide the injections to a man in his mid 20s.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#).

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## AUSTRALIAN CDC

### Alert as whooping cough on the rise

Daily Telegraph, General News, 17/02/2026, Emma Kirk, Page 2

Australia has recorded its highest rates of whooping cough in three decades, as the number of fully immunised children reached a 10-year low, a new Productivity Commission report has revealed. [...] The Australian Centre for Disease Control (ACDC) reported 54,000 cases of whooping cough in 2024, with NSW and Queensland having the highest number of cases across every state and territory.

Also reported by: [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

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### 'Increased risk' of measles in NSW after two more cases detected in Sydney's inner west

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 16/02/2026, Emma Kirk

Health authorities warned there is an increased risk of measles across NSW after two more cases were detected in Sydney's inner west. NSW Health confirmed the cases were not known to each other but were linked to a returned traveller from Southeast Asia.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [West Australian](#)

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## Whooping cough cases hit record high after 'potentially catastrophic' vaccine rate drop, experts say

ABC Online, Other, 16/02/2026, Luke Cooper

A "potentially catastrophic" decline in Australia's childhood vaccination rates has contributed to the sharpest increase in cases of whooping cough in 35 years, infectious disease experts say. Rates of whooping cough, a highly contagious respiratory disease also known as pertussis, rose to almost 800 cases per 100,000 Australian children in 2024–25, according to a recent Productivity Commission report.

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## Measles alert in Sydney's Inner West after two local cases traced to returned overseas traveller

7news.com.au, Other, 16/02/2026, Demi Huang

Two people have caught measles after being infected by a returned overseas traveller, raising concerns about the local spread of the highly infectious and dangerous disease. NSW Health on Monday issued a warning for Sydney's Inner West after confirming the two new cases, bringing the total number of measles infections in NSW to 16 so far in 2026.

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## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### From Ballarat startup to global giant: here's to Gekko's 30 golden years

Ballarat Courier, Other, 16/02/2026

In many ways, Gekko Systems began with a classic startup story: an innovative young couple acquires a business, develop the equipment required as a cost-saving measure, and run the operation from a little office in the back garden. [...] The GeVentor prototype was ultimately designed, developed and built in just six weeks, and was then approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in record time, demonstrating what's possible when collaboration, innovation and expertise combine.

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### Hidden prescription drug found in collagen tablets, TGA warns

The Medical Republic, Other, 16/02/2026, Amanda Sheppard

The Therapeutic Goods Administration has sounded the alarm on Natures Valley Collagen Builder tablets saying it could cause serious side effects. The warning comes after laboratory testing uncovered a high dose of undeclared sildenafil hidden in the product, exposing consumers to potentially dangerous cardiovascular risks, the regulator said in a statement.

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### ABC Radio Perth, Breakfast , 16/02/2026, Mark Gibson

Interview with Prof John Mamo, Head of Neurovascular and Metabolic Diseases at the Perron Institute, about probucol's potential in reducing dementia risk. Mamo explains that probucol, an older cholesterol-lowering drug used in parts of Asia, shows promising observational data suggesting a 62% lower incidence of dementia in people with cardiovascular disease compared to those on statins. He says the team plans to share these findings globally and engage the Therapeutic Goods Administration to explore its potential for treatment and prevention.

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## Rewriting the script

Launceston Examiner, General News, 17/02/2026, Joe Colbrook, Page 1

Tasmanian families requiring high-risk medications no longer face stressful delays as changes to laws around prescriptions come into effect. Chantelle Ling's 14-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter both have diagnosed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and require stimulant medications, which until recently could only be prescribed by a Tasmanian practitioner.

Also reported by: [Burnie Advocate \(Burnie\)](#).

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## FOOD STANDARDS

### Do not eat: Milo snack bars recalled nationwide

The New Daily, Other, 16/02/2026

A range of popular snack bars sold at major retailers across Australia has been recalled amid a contamination threat. Nestle Australia issued the order for four of its range of Milo Snack Bars through Food Standards Australia and New Zealand on Saturday.

[Read More](#)

### Popular snack sold at Coles, Aldi and Woolworths urgently recalled over contamination fears: Do not eat

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 16/02/2026

Milo snack bars are being urgently recalled after rubber from a manufacturing machine contaminated some products. [...] Food Standards Australia and New Zealand warned products contaminated with rubber could cause illness or injury if eaten.

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## AICIS

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