



TODAY'S NEWS

Sunday, 15th March 2026

[Minister Butler](#) | [Minister McAllister](#) | [Minister Rae](#) | [Assistant Minister McBride](#) |
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Sunday Canberra Times](#)** (page 1) reports ACT Policing data indicates that more than 17,000 calls (34 per cent) to the triple zero emergency line in 2025 were for non-emergencies, prompting a reminder from the Federal Government that inappropriate use of the emergency number can delay life-saving responses.
- **[The Sun Herald](#)** (page 5) reports researchers from the University of Sydney and St Vincent's Hospital have developed a clinical toolkit to assist healthcare professionals in addressing the lack of awareness and stigma associated with anal cancers, while noting that diagnoses have decreased by 75 per cent in women since the 1980s.
- **[The Sunday Herald Sun](#)** (page 6) reports the RACGP has criticised the Federal Government after MP Sam Rae and other representatives wrote to doctors pressuring them to adopt a 100 per cent bulk-billing model. While Health Minister Mark Butler defended the letters as discussions regarding the benefits of the 8.5 billion dollar Medicare investment, the college noted modelling shows these incentives do not work for all practices.
- **[The Sunday Territorian](#)** (page 19) reports Minister Mark Butler has directed the Federal Health Department to implement a 12-month trial that enables concession card holders to access pharmacy-prescribed contraceptives and certain antibiotics at the pharmaceutical benefits scheme concession rate. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has criticised

the proposal, with Vice President Dr Ramya Raman stating that the decision prioritises politics over patient safety and could put women's health at risk.

- **The Sun Herald** (page 25) reports Health Minister Mark Butler and the Federal Government have maintained current tobacco excise rates despite warnings that high taxes have contributed to an illicit tobacco market worth up to 8.5 billion dollars annually. The Illicit Tobacco and E-cigarette Commissioner reported that organised crime syndicates now control approximately 60 per cent of the national market, leading to a significant increase in violence and a projected 67 billion dollar shortfall in excise revenue.

MINISTER BUTLER

Billions up in smoke

Sun Herald, General News, 15/03/2026, Chris Vedelago & Pascual Juanola, Page 25

The plan was to "break" the customs search facility, to jam it up with so many shipping containers that the Australian Border Force would be too busy to detect all the other illicit goods flowing through the port. [...] At a press conference last year, Minister of Health Mark Butler said Australia was a victim of criminal gangs capitalising on a worldwide glut in cigarette production.

Also reported by: [Sunday Age \(Melbourne\)](#), [The Age \(Online\)](#), [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#), [Brisbane Times \(Online\)](#), [WA Today \(Online\)](#).

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'Disappointing': GPs blast Labor's bulk-billing push

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 15/03/2026, Charles Chadwick, Page 6

GPs have hit out at the Albanese government after it emerged Labor MPs wrote to doctors pressuring them to bulk bill. [...] In response to questions from the Sunday Herald Sun, Health Minister Mark Butler said 96 per cent of Australians were now within a 20-minute drive of a registered Medicare bulk-billing practice.

Also reported by: [Sunday Telegraph \(Sydney\)](#).

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GP body slams 'reckless' pill plan

Sunday Territorian, General News, 15/03/2026, Nathan Schmidt, Page 19

Australia's peak body for GPs has slammed plans to expand access to contraceptives, warning the "lobbyist-led" call could put women's health at risk. Health Minister Mark Butler appeared before the Pharmacy Guild conference on the Gold Coast on Friday, a year after announcing a national trial allowing pharmacists to prescribe concession card holders antibiotics for "uncomplicated" UTIs and contraceptives.

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A brand-new respite centre may become 'white elephant' without government funding

Canberra Times, Other, 14/03/2026, Megan Doherty

A decade ago, Yvonne Cuschieri and her friends sat in the Riverside Plaza shopping centre in Queanbeyan, collecting signatures for a petition calling on governments to build a respite care facility for young people with chronic or terminal illnesses who otherwise ended up in aged care homes. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler also wrote to the board late last year saying there are "currently no grant opportunities available to support respite care facilities for adults aged 16-60".

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Townsville retailer fears collapse as crime gangs take over tobacco market

Herald Sun, Other, 14/03/2026, Andrew McKaysmith

Organised crime syndicates from interstate are forcing a North Queensland retailer to the point of

financial ruin. [...] The veteran retailer warned Health Minister Mark Butler and Treasurer Jim Chalmers of the legal market's impending collapse early in the crisis.

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

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Funding for more rural GPs

Victor Harbor Times, Other, 14/03/2026, Michael Simmons

The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) has secured \$331.7 million from the Federal Government to deliver its national training program from now to December 2030. The funding, announced by Minister for Health and Ageing Mark Butler, provides five years of certainty for the training of Rural Generalist doctors serving rural, remote and First Nations communities across Australia.

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MINISTER MCALLISTER

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MINISTER RAE

'Disappointing': GPs blast Labor's bulk-billing push

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 15/03/2026, Charles Chadwick, Page 6

GPs have hit out at the Albanese government after it emerged Labor MPs wrote to doctors pressuring them to bulk bill. [...] In response to questions from the Sunday Herald Sun, Health Minister Mark Butler said 96 per cent of Australians were now within a 20-minute drive of a registered Medicare bulk-billing practice.

Also reported by: [Sunday Telegraph \(Sydney\)](#)

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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ASSISTANT MINISTER WHITE

Women's heart health to be focus of new government panel

Star Weekly, Other, 14/03/2026

The Federal Government has announced the establishment of a new Ministerial Expert Panel on Women's Health, with a focus on improving cardiovascular outcomes for women, girls, and gender diverse people. [...] "Heart disease is frequently misunderstood as a male health issue, yet it remains one of the leading health risks for women," said Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Rebecca White.

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Tasmania's new aged care wing raises bar

Sunday Tasmanian, General News, 15/03/2026, Sue Bailey, Page 4

In a boost to aged care in Tasmania, Uniting AgeWell will this week open three new wings at Ningana at Sorell-- increasing its bed capacity to cater for 112 residents. It says the \$24m state of the art development includes a 48bed expansion, a cafe, family club lounge, bar, hairdressing salon, multipurpose rooms and chapel.

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DISABILITY AND CARERS

Closure of Canberra autism centre 'deeply distressing'

Sunday Canberra Times, General News, 15/03/2026, Lanie Tindale, Page 4

The immediate closure of a \$5 million Canberra-based centre for autistic children only a few years after opening is "deeply distressing", a local politician says. Greens politician Laura Nuttall said liquidators gave families no notice before immediately closing all AEIOU Foundation centres, including one in Garran, on Thursday.

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CBD oil improves social skills in autistic children, Deakin University study finds

Northern Territory News, Other, 14/03/2026, Gemma Carter

A 25 per cent improvement in social abilities and reduced anxiety – those are the newly published results driving researchers to seek federal funding for a larger trial of CBD oil in autistic children. The Deakin University pilot study, now published in the peer-reviewed journal Autism Research, tested the cannabis compound in 29 primary school-aged children with promising outcomes that lead researcher Dr Talitha Ford says warrant a much larger, multi-site trial to determine which children benefit most.

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

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NDIS workers claim to be worked like slaves at Jigsaw social enterprise hub

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 14/03/2026, Julie Cross & John Rolfe

Angry NDIS participants claim they felt like slaves working at a social enterprise which promised them help to find paid work, while billing the taxpayer tens of millions of dollars in "training fees". Jigsaw runs hubs in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Canberra, digitalising records for banks, private firms and government agencies.

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

PRIMARY CARE

Misdial dilemma

Sunday Canberra Times, General News, 15/03/2026, Bageshri Savyasachi, Page 1

Police fear a persistent habit of dialling triple zero for non-emergencies is putting lives at risk as Canberrans reach for their phones in growing numbers. New data reveals more than 17,000 triple zero calls in 2025 were not emergencies - clogging a system designed for life-and-death situations.

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POPULATION HEALTH

DV sector is in urgent need of more resources

Sun Herald, Editorials, 15/03/2026, Page 30

The story of Sophie Quinn, the 25-year-old pregnant woman allegedly shot dead by her former partner, along with two others in January, has devastated the small NSW town of Lake Cargelligo and, indeed, the state. [...] An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare analysis of national datasets, included in its submission to the inquiry, found there were more deaths, and deaths by suicide, among people with a recorded experience of family, domestic and sexual violence compared with those without.

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Butt to stop with new smokes laws

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 15/03/2026, Regan Hodge, Page 4

Melbourne's tobacco war could be extinguished via new laws the government is proposing that will include powers to forcibly close dodgy retailers. The Sunday Herald Sun can exclusively reveal that the proposed tougher legislation will force retailers to close for up to 90 days if caught selling illicit tobacco.

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Tobacco boss: Oz lost plot on cigs

Sunday Telegraph, Edition Changes, 15/03/2026, Charles Chadwick, Page 21

A top global tobacco executive has branded Australia "a busted flush" amid a booming black market for illicit cigarettes and vapes and a continued collapse in revenue from tobacco excise. British American Tobacco chief corporate officer Kingsley Wheaton has issued a direct appeal to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to "reset or rebase" tobacco excise in the May budget.

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

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Aussie equality closely watched

Sunday Times, General News, 15/03/2026, Page 24

Australia's work towards gender equality is being watched closely by other nations as women and girls around the world face a rollback of hardwon rights. The 70th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is the UN's biggest annual gathering on gender equality and women's rights.

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'No easy solution' to supply shortages: Halton

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 14/03/2026, Kate Cowling

In the wake of the Middle East crisis, a warning has been issued about supply chain challenges-- Australia's position as a small market at the end of the supply chain make it vulnerable to continued

medicines shortages, former Department of Finance secretary Jane Halton said. The global health leader and former senior public servant, who

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Australia's famous flying doctors more needed than ever

West Australian, Other, 14/03/2026, Allannah Sciberras

Rachel Crozier would need to travel to the nearest city, 400km away, to access the healthcare she and her family need if it wasn't for vital help. [...] Its residents are used to being resilient when it comes to healthcare but when problems persist, they rely on weekly visits from the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Also reported by: [Ballarat Courier \(Online\)](#), [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#), [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#).

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CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

The cancer on the rise we don't want to talk about

Sun Herald, General News, 15/03/2026, Angus Thomson, Page 5

Simone Annis was about to celebrate her 50th birthday when she noticed a lump in an unusual spot. She was fit, healthy, and had recently run a marathon, so was blindsided when a colonoscopy confirmed she had anal cancer a disease she knew nothing about.

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VAD rule 'hurts regional people'

Sunday Telegraph, Edition Changes, 15/03/2026, Kate Kyriacou, Page 11

Australians with terminal illnesses living in regional and remote communities are dying in traumatic circumstances, without dignity, because of a legal technicality requiring a "one line" fix. Medical professionals, peak bodies, lawyers, academics and grieving families have all pleaded with the federal government to amend a law that prevents people in the country from accessing Voluntary Assisted Dying.

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

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Legal tweak is simply a must

Sunday Mail Brisbane, Editorials, 15/03/2026, Page 60

Australians-- whether they live in the city or the bush-- deserve the same access to voluntary assisted dying. It is that simple.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

More kids, and parents, are being diagnosed with ADHD

Sun Herald, General News, 15/03/2026, Paula Goodyer, Page 22

We hear so much about the challenge of raising children with ADHD, but what about those parents who are diagnosed? How does a condition that can disrupt your ability to organise, focus and manage time make parenting even harder?

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

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IMMUNISATION

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HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

Future of Joondalup Health Campus after hours GP clinic no longer uncertain following media attention

Kalgoorlie Miner, Other, 14/03/2026, Claire Sadler

Private hospital provider Ramsay Health Care says its after hours GP clinic in Joondalup will not be closing, just hours after media reported its future was under review. A Joondalup Health Campus spokeswoman confirmed the clinic would remain open, despite earlier telling The West Australian the service was still under review and refusing to answer specific questions about the future of the centre.

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HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

3AW, Weekend Mornings, 14/03/2026, Darren James

Interview with Victorian Opposition leader Jess Wilson about the Rosebud Hospital. Wilson announces that a Liberal government would commit \$340 million to rebuild the hospital if elected in November, arguing that the facility has been neglected and lacks adequate capacity and services. She says the redevelopment would expand the emergency department, double capacity, and add services including cancer treatment, dialysis and elective surgery to meet growing demand on the Mornington Peninsula.

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

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AUSTRALIAN CDC

Western, Northern Sydney on alert amid surge in measles cases

The Australian, Other, 14/03/2026, Abisha Sapkota

Sydneysiders are on high alert after another case of measles was confirmed in the city. NSW Health is urging people in the city's north and west to be alert for signs and symptoms of the highly infectious disease, warning the latest confirmed case was acquired locally.

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

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

The latest injectable peptides trend on social media is worrying health experts

ABC Online, Other, 14/03/2026, Benay Ozdemir & Rachel Carbonell

The latest wellness craze to take social media by storm is fuelling a growing grey market of injectable peptides in Australia, and it has experts worried. [...] There are a number of peptide-based medicines that are approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), the peak body responsible for medicines regulation in Australia.

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