



TODAY'S NEWS

Wednesday, 18th March 2026

[Minister Butler](#) | [Minister McAllister](#) | [Minister Rae](#) | [Assistant Minister McBride](#) |
[Assistant Minister White](#) | [Special Envoy Repacholi](#) | [Department](#)
| [Ageing and Aged Care](#) | [Disability and Carers](#) | [Primary Care](#)
| [Population Health](#) | [Chronic Conditions and Screening](#) |
[Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#) | [Immunisation](#) | [Health Systems Strategies](#)
| [Health Economics & Research](#) | [First Nations Health](#)
| [Public Hospital and Health Reform](#) | [Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office](#)
| [Health Workforce](#) | [Technology Assessment and Access](#)
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LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Australian](#)** (page 9) reports that researchers from the University of Sydney have published a study which found cannabis had no effect on the treatment of depression, anxiety and PTSD, and found little proof it had beneficial effects for managing Tourette's syndrome, insomnia and autism.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 9) reports that a Safe Work Australia report has recommended the lowering of workplace exposure limits to nine hazardous chemicals, including respirable crystalline silica. The change is estimated to cost employers over \$30bn across 10 years but would be outweighed by benefits to the public health system, workers and the economy.
- **[The Australian Financial Review](#)** (page 10) reports that a new analysis of pricing data has found NDIS providers are raising their fees to match higher federal government price caps but are not improving their level or quality of service.
- **[The West Australian](#)** (page 3) reports that WA Premier Roger Cook has labeled May the "sweet spot" for the state's annual free flu vaccine rollout, but shadow health minister Libby Mettam is calling for them to be offered from April instead.
- **[The Northern Territory News](#)** (page 8) reports that there are concerns regarding high temperatures and a lack of staffing at the Royal Darwin Hospital's maternity ward.

MINISTER BUTLER

NDIS is mine-blowing

West Australian, Business News, 18/03/2026, Adrian Rauso, Page 19

The Federal Government's annual spending on the National Disability Insurance Scheme is projected to be two years away from surpassing all the taxes and royalties from Australia's powerhouse mining sector, prompting fresh calls for a policy overhaul. [...] Asked if more could be done to curb the disability scheme's spending, NDIS Minister Mark Butler did not respond to a request for comment.

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

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Stuart hopefuls respond to top troubles

Plains Producer, General News, 18/03/2026, Page 13

Geoff Brock - Independent 1. [...] I've been working very closely with Mark Butler and also Chris Picton to attract a GP into Peterborough and, in the meantime, have secured a locum in the Peterborough District Hospital so people can be bulk billed under Medicare.

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

Calls to fix Medicare bypass

Weekly Times, General News, 18/03/2026, Kate Dowler, Page 12

Australia's universal health insurance scheme Medicare is "not fit for purpose" as it fails to provide fair access and equitable funding for rural and regional Australians. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler's office was contacted for comment.

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Landmark study finds cannabis not effective for depression, anxiety

Australian Financial Review, Other, 17/03/2026, Sam Irvine

The largest ever review of medical cannabis trials has found no evidence it helps with anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, despite an explosion in the number of prescriptions being written each year to treat the conditions in Australia.

[Read More](#)

A DNA test, a match and a decades-old IVF mix-up

ABC Online, Other, 17/03/2026, Elise Kinsella and Kate Higgins

When Sasha Szafranski connected with a stranger on a genealogy website, she uncovered a mistake that had been hidden for 30 years. [...] While the Szafranski embryo mix-up was reported to the regulator, Federal Health Minister Mark Butler says he only learnt about this serious IVF error through the ABC's reporting.

[Read More](#)

New pharmacy applications soar post 60-days: Butler

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 17/03/2026

Despite warnings that pharmacies would close as a result of the decision to introduce 60-day dispensing, interest in opening new stores is on the rise, Minister for Health, Disability and Ageing, Mark Butler says.

[Read More](#)

Australian Pharmacist

Australian Pharmacist, Other, 17/03/2026, Ruth Cooper

One in 7 Australian women live with endometriosis, yet diagnosis can still take almost a decade. [...] At: www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-11/bridging-the-gender-pain-gap-pain-inquiry-report.pdf Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Just.Equal calls on government to fund regional organisations

OUTinPerth, Other, 18/03/2026

Just.Equal Australia has called on the federal government not to fund large inner-city LGBTQIA+ organisations to roll out national LGBTQIA+ health training. [...] "That's why Just.Equal Australia has written to Federal Health minister, Mark Butler, asking him to favour smaller and non-urban organisations when the \$10 million is allocated."

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APP2026 showcases the best of pharmacy

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 17/03/2026

APP2026 wrapped up on Saturday after three days, with thousands of pharmacists, sponsors and industry partners coming together on the Gold Coast to celebrate innovation, leadership and excellence in community pharmacy. [...] The conference was honoured to welcome the Premier of Queensland, the Hon David Crisafulli MP, as well as the Federal Minister for Health, the Hon Mark Butler MP, and Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, who addressed delegates during the program.

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A win for women's health

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 17/03/2026

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has welcomed the announcement of a national women's health pilot aimed at improving access to contraception and treatment for uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs). The national pilot was announced at APP2026 last week by the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Mark Butler MP.

[Read More](#)

PBAC warns early GLP-1 listing risks locking in high prices

The Limbic, Other, 17/03/2026, Emma Koehn

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee has raised concerns that extending a PBS listing to GLP-1RAs for obesity too soon could end up costing taxpayers more once new weight management agents come to market. Full minutes released this week from the November 2025 PBAC meeting paint a detailed picture of how the committee views the obesity treatments market, and shed light on the thinking behind advice it gave to health minister Mark Butler about equitable access to GLP-1RAs in Australia.

[Read More](#)

PBAC maps path to PBS access for GLP-1 RA obesity therapies

The Medical Republic, Other, 17/03/2026, Amanda Sheppeard

Australia's medicines advisory committee has outlined a cautious, targeted pathway for subsidised access to GLP-1 RA obesity medicines, recommending a staged rollout focused on high-risk groups while broader use remains under review. [...] The advice followed a request from federal health minister Mark Butler in March 2025.

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ABC, 7:30, 17/03/2026, Sarah Ferguson

A DNA test leads Sasha Szafranski to discover a decades-old IVF mix-up after matching with a stranger identified as her maternal aunt from the same town. The finding suggests her biological origins differ from what her family believed, raising questions about errors at a fertility clinic later linked to major providers. Health Minister Mark Butler says the case highlights a lack of transparency around IVF mistakes and calls for better reporting and accountability.

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MINISTER RAE

Don't make meal of it

Herald Sun, General News, 18/03/2026, Julie Cross, Page 11

A powerful new supergroup of 40 aged care organisations is warning that coming reforms are an expensive mistake that could cost older Australians more for the same service. [...] Minister for Aged Care and Seniors Sam Rae said he was working through how the CHSP transition would look.

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

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Sector uncertain about HELF

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 17/03/2026, Katarina Lloyd Jones

Almost half of respondents in a recent Mirus Australia poll say they are still determining how to structure Higher Everyday Living Fee models. [...] Minister for Aged Care and Seniors Sam Rae appeared on Channel 9 news and called the reported policy "absolutely disgusting," but the provider defended itself, arguing it was implementing a government mandated policy.

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Aged care minister pursues claims providers charging premium for basic services

Your Life Choices, Other, 17/03/2026

Aged Care Minister Sam Rae has asked the sector's regulator to investigate claims that residential facilities are stripping back services under new aged care reforms. There have been reports of aged care facilities removing televisions from bedrooms and turning off wi-fi unless residents paid for an upgraded package.

[Read More](#)

2GB, Mornings, 17/03/2026, Mark Levy

Interview with Patricia Sparrow, CEO of COTA, about older Australians being charged for non-essential aged care services. Sparrow says higher everyday living fees should only cover optional extras and stresses the need to prevent a two-tier system of care. She welcomes Minister Sam Rae's action in notifying the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and urges older Australians to ensure providers follow government guidelines and report any concerns.

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2GB, Breakfast, 17/03/2026, Ben Fordham

An aged care giant has backflipped on plans to charge residents extra for a hot breakfast. Opal Healthcare was set to remove hot breakfast, homemade cakes and nightly desserts from its menu. [...] The Aged Care Minister Sam Rae has told the Daily Telegraph, if a resident has been receiving a service without any extra cost, it's simply not fair to suddenly start billing them.

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ABC South East NSW, Breakfast, 17/03/2026, Eddie Williams

Compere mentions that there are concerns that aged care residents have been paying more than they should. He states that according to Aged Care Minister Sam Rae, he's asking the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to look into claims of misuse of the higher everyday living fee after some aged care residents say that they are being charged for services that they can't use.

ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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[Back to Top](#)

ASSISTANT MINISTER WHITE

\$31m funding boost for aged care

Launceston Examiner, General News, 18/03/2026, Lauren Richardson, Page 6

A federal \$31 million funding injection is set to transform Tasmanian aged care, with Northern facilities like Deloraine's Grenoch Home doubling capacity to ease hospital pressure. [...] Assistant Health Minister Rebecca White said it would ensure older Tasmanians could stay in the communities they'd lived in, through their twilight years.

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WIN Hobart, WIN News, 17/03/2026, Bruce Roberts

Older Tasmanians will get improved aged care as Grenoch Home in Deloraine receives a nearly \$18m federal investment to expand its capacity and facilities. Assistant Minister Rebecca White says the investment lets people stay in their communities, surrounded by friends and family, while sharing stories and memories.

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[Back to Top](#)

SPECIAL ENVOY REPACHOLI

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[Back to Top](#)

DEPARTMENT

Sector uncertain about HELF

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 17/03/2026, Katarina Lloyd Jones

Almost half of respondents in a recent Mirus Australia poll say they are still determining how to structure Higher Everyday Living Fee models. [...] Minister for Aged Care and Seniors Sam Rae appeared on Channel 9 news and called the reported policy "absolutely disgusting," but the provider defended itself, arguing it was implementing a government mandated policy.

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Cost 'major barrier' to access, patients lowering doses

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 17/03/2026, Kay Dunkley

Submissions from 491 consumers, 25 health professionals and 23 organisations to a Department of Health public consultation unanimously supported subsidising GLP-1s for obesity treatment, documents released today (17 March) reveal.

[Read More](#)

When an algorithm overrides professional judgements: the cost for

older Australians

Health Services Daily, Other, 17/03/2026, Adrian Morgan

Appeals against home-care assessment decisions recently increased more than 20-fold in about four weeks. [...] But the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has consistently stood by the reliability of the integrated assessment tool and the associated algorithm.

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Referral reform could finally kill the fax

The Medical Republic, Other, 17/03/2026, Holly Payne

Standardised national referral rules and technology could finally spell the end of days for the seemingly unkillable fax machine, multiple GP software vendors tell The Medical Republic. The Medical Software Industry Association, which represents companies like Best Practice, Tyro Health and HotDoc, emphasised the importance of referral reform in its submission to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's consultation on modernising referral pathways.

[Read More](#)

3RRR FM, Breakfasters, 17/03/2026, Daniel Burt, Nat Harris and Jason Moore

Australians aged 50 and over are urged to discuss flu prevention with their GP or pharmacist as DOH data shows cases in this age group rose 147% in the past month. The Therapeutic Goods Administration has extended approval of the Fluad vaccine, previously for children, to adults 50 and over.

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MIX 104.9, 360, 17/03/2026, Katie Woolf

Interview with Sue Shearer, CEO of COTA NT, about cuts to the Top End Memory Services in the NT. Shearer warns that reductions to Commonwealth Dementia Program funding will cut two positions, including the clinic's full-time doctor to half-time, increasing wait times and pressure on remaining staff. [...] Woolf reads NT Health's official statement, noting that they are working closely with the Australian Government and the federal health department to ensure Top End Memory Services continues offering community, home, and remote outreach services.

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[Back to Top](#)

AGEING AND AGED CARE

The expensive new problem facing aged care residents

Sydney Morning Herald, Money, 18/03/2026, Rachel Lane, Page 25

Australia's aged care system has never been simple, but the November reforms around accommodation payments are creating an expensive new problem for residents entering care. The government's My Aged Care website says, "you can choose to pay a lump sum any time after you enter care".

Also reported by: [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#), [Age \(Melbourne\)](#)

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Projects in the pipeline

Illawarra Mercury, General News, 18/03/2026, Natalie Croxon, Page 1

Aged care in the Illawarra is facing a dire situation after 10 years of stagnating bed numbers. More than 300 beds will be created when a number of projects are completed however - and they can't come soon enough.

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

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\$27.5M Govt grant-backed aged care project lodges DA

The Weekly Source, Other, 17/03/2026, Lauren Broomham

UnitingCare Queensland has lodged a Development Application for a new 42-bed aged care home in Cairns. The proposed 42-bed Pinangba Hollingsworth Elders Village will relocate the long-running Hollingsworth service from its current site in Portsmouth to a new site in Westcourt and is thanks to a \$27.5 million Federal Government capital grant for the project last year.

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ABC Radio Adelaide, Mornings, 17/03/2026, Rory McClaren

Interview with Patricia Sparrow, CEO of COTA, about optional fees in aged care. Sparrow explains that Opal HealthCare's recent charges for extras highlight the need to keep higher everyday living fees truly optional and not compromise essential care. She emphasises that the government is reviewing guidelines to ensure all residents receive quality care, choice, and nutrition without being forced into paying for extras.

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

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ABC Radio Hobart, Statewide Mornings, 17/03/2026, Leon Compton

Interview with Andrew Kinnerly, CEO of Uniting AgeWell, about expanding residential aged care in Sorell. Kinnerly explains that the 48-bed extension is self-funded and stresses the need for government support and changes to the funding model to encourage more providers to invest. He highlights that residential care now includes rehabilitation, palliative, and some acute services, but bed shortages remain a major challenge for the health system.

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

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[Back to Top](#)

DISABILITY AND CARERS

NDIS providers up fees but not service: report

Australian Financial Review, General News, 18/03/2026, Michael Smith and John Kehoe, Page 10

NDIS providers are bumping up their fees to match higher federal government price caps without increasing the level or quality of service they provide, according to an analysis of pricing data on the \$50 billion scheme that highlights flaws in how...

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

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

Autism centre closure crisis

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 18/03/2026, Agnes Gichuhi, Page 20

An Adelaide family has been plunged into dire financial strain, scrambling to find help for their special-needs son, after his specialist childcare centre abruptly entered liquidation. On Thursday, the NDISfunded AEIOU Foundation closed all centres, including South Australia's only facility at North Brighton.

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

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[Back to Top](#)

PRIMARY CARE

Free GP service for rough sleepers opens first clinic in city

A free mobile GP service dedicated to people experiencing homelessness has opened its first Newcastle clinic. Street Side Medics has started operating at the Salvation Army in Hamilton on Fridays from 10am to noon.

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Only private midwifery practice in WA's Kimberley shuts, leaving mothers with limited options

ABC Online, Other, 17/03/2026

The only private midwifery practice in Western Australia's far north is closing, leaving pregnant women — especially those on working visas — vulnerable and without options. Kimberley Maternity has operated in Broome, more than 2,000 kilometres from Perth, since November 2021, providing pre- and post-natal care to women across the remote Kimberley region.

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What's the most visited healthcare destination?

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 17/03/2026

Australians are increasingly turning to community pharmacies for frontline healthcare, according to the Community Pharmacy Industry Insights Report 2026 release by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in partnership with Westpac. The report shows Australians visited their local pharmacy 18 times on average last year, making pharmacies the most frequently accessed part of the primary healthcare system.

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[Back to Top](#)

POPULATION HEALTH

A bottle shop spat could pave way for new women's refuge

Age, General News, 18/03/2026, Adam Carey, Page 13

What began as a local controversy over the opening of a new bottle shop near a home for vulnerable men in Melbourne's north has triggered a multimillion-dollar quest to build the first women's shelter in the same community. [...] More than one in two women who seek accommodation in a crisis shelter are turned away, according to data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

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

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NTCA beefing up delegate health at conference

Northern Territory News, Business News, 18/03/2026, Camden Smith, Page 25

The biggest event of its kind in the Northern Territory is putting the health of its members and up to 700 attendees at the top of the agenda this week, with free and potentially life-changing advice available for the duration. The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association's (NTCA) annual industry conference at the Darwin Convention Centre this year features an impressive showcase of health services, to ensure as many people as possible can check their health status.

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What is vaginismus and how do you know if you have it?

ABC Online, Other, 17/03/2026, Anna Chisholm

Madeleine Edwards had never heard of the term vaginismus before, but about six months after giving birth to her baby girl Carmine, she was diagnosed with the condition. The 31-year-old, who lives in Naarm/Melbourne, says it was a "heavy" diagnosis to receive as she adjusted to motherhood.

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It's Australia's leading cause of death, but how does dementia kill you?

Dementia is now Australia's leading cause of death, and there is no cure. [...] This came out of Australian Bureau of Statistics numbers and also Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Dementia Australia report.

[Read More](#)

Men's health impacts pregnancy and child outcomes, and should be included in guidelines, experts say

ABC Online, Other, 17/03/2026, Lauren Roberts

A new review published in the Lancet argues the pre-conception health of men and partners is currently overlooked by policies and society. Clinical factors such as sperm health were considered, as well as behavioural factors, including the level of support given to pregnant people before and after birth.

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Reduced physical activity due to global heating will lead to rise in health issues, study says

The Guardian, Other, 17/03/2026, Chloé Farand

Rising temperatures are making physical activity undesirable and even dangerous in many parts of the world, and as global heating worsens, it will further affect how much people are able to move. Researchers analysed data from 156 countries between 2000 and 2022 and modelled how rising temperatures may affect physical activity globally by 2050.

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Dentist reveals the everyday mistake millions of us are making

NEWS.com.au, Other, 17/03/2026, Naomi Kaplan

Can you guess how much bacteria is hiding in your mouth right now? Brace yourself — because it's pretty gross. There are actually more germs thriving between your teeth and cheeks than there are people on the entire planet.

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

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Men told to prepare for pregnancy too: Fathers' alcohol intake and fitness may influence babies' development, experts discover

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 17/03/2026, Ciaran Foreman

Preparing for a healthy pregnancy has traditionally been seen as a woman's responsibility – with expectant mothers urged to stop drinking alcohol, avoid certain foods and overhaul their lifestyle to give their baby the best possible start in life. But scientists now say fathers' health before conception may also play a crucial role in shaping a child's development.

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Indigenous children locked up at 'distressingly high' rate in Tasmanian youth detention centre

National Indigenous Times, Other, 17/03/2026, Callan Morse

New Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) data indicates Indigenous children and young people continue to be disproportionately represented in northern Tasmania's Ashley Youth Detention Centre. [...] According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the rate of Indigenous young people detained in Tasmania in the March 2025 quarter was 9.8 per 10,000 people, up from 9.0 per 10,000 in the June quarter of the previous year.

[Read More](#)

2GB, Mornings, 17/03/2026, Mark Levy

Levy discusses the credibility of NSW Health Minister Ryan Park's claims about declining teen vaping rates, questioning whether the reported drop from 30% to 20% reflects a real reduction in vaping or if

teens are just hiding their habits due to stricter laws and black market sales. He argues that the government's crackdown pushed vaping underground.

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[Back to Top](#)

CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

Rosie's story goes viral with push from Musk

The Australian, General News, 18/03/2026, Natasha Bitá, Page 7

Elon Musk is among the godfathers of artificial intelligence who have shone the global science spotlight on an Australian engineer who used AI to create an experimental vaccine to treat his dog's cancer. The Australian's exclusive article about pet pup Rosie's recovery has gone viral, with at least 20 million people viewing tweets about owner Paul Conyngham's use of AI to collaborate with University of NSW scientists to develop an mRNA vaccine.

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

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Study to test gut instinct on cancer

Herald Sun, Edition Changes, 18/03/2026, Robyn Riley, Page 10

Melbourne scientists have a "gut" feeling that fighting the blood cancer multiple myeloma could be boosted by the body's own healthy gut bacteria. The effect of gut bacteria on myeloma outcomes will be examined in an Australianfirst study by the Epworth Centre for Immunotherapies and Snowdome Laboratories.

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

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How cancer hits women

Herald Sun, General News, 18/03/2026, Page 13

Women are more likely to survive cancer than men but face a higher risk of serious and adverse side effects from treatment. The Adelaide University research identified consistent differences between male and female cancer patients in both survival and treatment toxicity.

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

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Labor pledges \$400,000 for blood cancer support

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 18/03/2026, Brad Crouch, Page 8

Labor will give a \$400,000, four-year grant to Myeloma Australia to improve access to specialised nursing support, with a particular focus on assisting country patients, if reelected. The move has been applauded by celebrated retired football commentator Sandy Roberts, who is living with the incurable blood cancer.

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Queensland researchers investigate modern diet link to rising bowel cancer rates in young Australians

7News.com.au, Other, 17/03/2026, Jennifer Bechwati

Bowel cancer is now Australia's deadliest cancer for people aged 25 to 54. Queensland researchers are investigating whether modern diets are fuelling a dramatic rise in bowel cancer among young Australians, as the disease becomes the nation's deadliest cancer for people aged 25 to 54.

[Read More](#)

Bowel cancer in young people is skyrocketing. Researchers think the answer could be in the gut microbiome

Queensland researchers will study if the gut microbiome is linked to the alarming rise in bowel cancer among younger Australians. While screening programs have helped reduce bowel cancer in people over 50, it remains one of our deadliest cancers with more than 5000 Australians dying from the disease each year.

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Pharmacists back urgent national action on kidney disease

Retail Pharmacy, Other, 17/03/2026

Pharmacists are backing calls for urgent national action on kidney disease, with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) supporting Kidney Health Australia 's new strategy to address the growing health burden. PSA supports 'code red response' PSA representatives were among the 140 stakeholders who joined the inaugural National Kidney Summit in October and contributed to the development of Kidney Code Red: The Response.

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Your morning cuppa could be protecting your brain, massive study reveals

Your Life Choices, Other, 17/03/2026, Don Turrobia

That steaming mug of coffee you reach for each morning might be doing more than waking you up—it could be safeguarding your brain against dementia, according to groundbreaking new research. A comprehensive 43-year study following more than 130,000 participants has uncovered compelling evidence that moderate coffee and tea consumption may help protect against cognitive decline as we age.

[Read More](#)

Channel 7, Seven News, 17/03/2026, Rosanna Mangiarelli and Will Goodings

New UQ research is examining whether junk food contributes to rising cancer rates among younger Australians by altering gut health. Scientists are investigating how ultra-processed foods and additives like artificial sweeteners, emulsifiers, and added sugars may disrupt gut bacteria, trigger inflammation, and increase cancer risk.

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Channel 9, Nine News, 17/03/2026, Georgie Gardner

For school teacher and mum Amy Jeeves, there was no gut feeling something was wrong. Bowel cancer came barreling into her life seemingly out of nowhere. I had some quite bad stomach pains and presented to emergency. Diagnosed with the disease the very next day. Undergoing chemotherapy then surgery, Amy's now cancer free. But the 39 year old is a part of an unenviable and expanding cohort of young Aussies. Australian researchers believe the trillions of bacteria living inside us, our gut microbiome, can be a key driver of gut diseases.

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2GB, Afternoons, 17/03/2026, Michael McLaren

Interview with Dr Ben Tran, Medical Oncologist at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, about predicting testicular cancer recurrence in young men. Tran explains that men aged 20–39 face a high risk of testicular cancer and removal of one testicle rarely impacts sexual health. He notes that a new blood test detecting microRNA 371 can identify men at higher risk of recurrence.

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ABC Radio Hobart, Breakfast, 17/03/2026, Tracey Strong

Interview with Matt Kirkcaldie, Senior Lecturer in Neuroscience in the Wicking Dementia Centre, about why dementia is Australia's leading cause of death. Kirkcaldie explains that dementia gradually damages brain function until it disrupts vital processes, and that improved recognition now links it more

directly to death. He stresses prevention through lifestyle changes like managing cardiovascular health, staying socially active, and addressing hearing or vision issues.

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[Back to Top](#)

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Delay in fixing system fails patients, families

Age, Editorials, 18/03/2026, Page 18

"It is almost certain that there will be a big bill at the end of this process ... but I don't see that so much as a cost to budget as a profound investment in a fairer, more decent Victoria." Those were the words of then-premier Daniel Andrews in February 2019, as he announced a royal commission into the state's "broken" mental health system.

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ADHD mini brain sleeps

Courier Mail, General News, 18/03/2026, Page 9

When we're performing difficult tasks, our brains can sometimes enter brief periods of "sleep-like" activity when they need a break. Australian researchers have found that this sleep-like activity may be more common in people with attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which they say could open up new options for helping patients with issues paying attention.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#)

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Mental health system 'failing'

Hobart Mercury, General News, 18/03/2026, Ria Pandey, Page 3

Most Australians believe the mental healthcare system is failing those who need it most, a new poll finds, as a peak psychiatry body demands urgent federal investment in the sector. A new Essential poll commissioned by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists surveyed 1020 Australians the majority of whom either had indirect or direct experience of mental ill-health on the state of the nation's mental healthcare services.

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Mental health bed shuffle to cope with flu

West Australian, General News, 18/03/2026, Jessica Page and Oliver Lane, Page 10

Another leaked complaint from doctors has fuelled concerns over WA's winter hospital strategy, after it was confirmed a mental health ward will be re-purposed to make up the "additional capacity" that was promised. An email from the office of the South Metropolitan Health Service executive director told staff that a 'ministerial decision' has been made to "change the use" of the top floor of Cockburn Health's women's mental health unit.

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Employers reveal excluding candidates with mental illness, disability and age in new report

ABC Online, Other, 17/03/2026, Bronwyn Herbert and Melanie Vujkovic

Seven in 10 employers are excluding candidates in certain groups, including those who live with a long-term illness, disability, mental illness or are over 55, according to a new survey. The Australian HR Institute (AHRI) surveyed more than 600 business leaders or senior human resources decision-makers and found one-third of employers admitted to excluding workers with mental illness.

[Read More](#)

More than a day: data reveals how long mental health patients spent secluded at Mater

Mental Health patients in the Newcastle hospital were secluded on average longer than anywhere else in the state. Patients requiring seclusion at Mater's mental health centre spent an average of 17 hours longer alone when compared to patients at other NSW hospitals, new data reveals.

[Read More](#)

'Robbing Peter to pay Paul': Leaked letter reveals WA women's mental health beds to be used for aged care patients

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 17/03/2026, Hamish Hastie

The Cook government's winter health strategy will see the number of women's mental health beds at the Cockburn Health facility shrink by one-third while they're diverted to elderly patients. The dedicated inpatient mental health facility close to Cockburn Central has 75 beds, and the changes will see 25 of those used for elderly women in the hospital system awaiting care placements.

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[Back to Top](#)

IMMUNISATION

May best for flu jab: Cook

West Australian, General News, 18/03/2026, Claire Sadler, Page 3

The Premier has backed May as the "sweet spot" for WA's annual free flu vaccine rollout despite calls to start a month earlier to help protect against the winter surge. Shadow health minister Libby Mettam wants free flu vaccinations to be offered from April instead of May, and for the jabs to continue to be free for everyone for six months.

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

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Going camping this Easter? You could be eligible for a Japanese encephalitis vaccine

Illawarra Mercury, Other, 17/03/2026, Kate McIlwain

People who are going caravanning, camping, boating or fishing in an area deemed "high-risk" for Japanese encephalitis, regardless of where in NSW they live, can now get a free vaccine. NSW Health announced it was expanding free access to the vaccine following detection of the virus late in the mosquito season.

Also reported by: [Yahoo! News Australia \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

Doctors urge Tasmanians to get vaccinated after nearly 100 Covid and flu deaths

The Mercury, Other, 17/03/2026, Sue Bailey

With nearly 100 deaths in Tasmania from Covid and influenza last year doctors are urging people to get vaccinated. Health Department data shows that last year 50 people died from Covid compared with 120 in 2024, 46 from influenza up from 28 in 2024 and eight from Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) compared with 12 in 2024.

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

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Channel 9, Nine News, 17/03/2026, Michael Thomson

The Cook government's winter flu plan faces scrutiny after the WA Opposition claims leaked emails show women's mental health beds at Coburn Health will be cut by a third to make room for flu patients. The Opposition is calling for free flu vaccines for six months starting in April.

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FIVEAA, Mornings, 17/03/2026, Graeme Goodings

Interview with Paul Van Buynder, Professor from the School of Medicine at Griffith University, about flu risks and vaccination for adults over 50. Buynder explains that adults over 50 face higher flu hospitalisations and deaths due to weaker immune systems and chronic conditions, and new vaccines now extend protection to this age group. He urges Australians to get vaccinated early through their GP or pharmacist.

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[Back to Top](#)

HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

Business baulks at plan to rework R&D tax subsidy

Australian Financial Review, General News, 18/03/2026, Ronald Mizen and Tess Bennett, Page 8

Business groups have urged the Albanese government to use the budget in May to overhaul Australia's innovation ecosystem, but have baulked at a proposal to strip R&D tax subsidies from smaller companies.

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

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[Back to Top](#)

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Goo-dbye to infection that damages hearts

Cairns Post, General News, 18/03/2026, Emma Cam, Page 9

Free soap and shampoo refill stations in Yarrabah are helping turn the tide on a devastating heart disease that dis-proportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Health data has revealed a sharp drop in rheumatic heart disease cases across Queensland, as Yarrabah, 55km east of Cairns, pushes forward a program tackling the infections that can lead to the disease.

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[Back to Top](#)

PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

Heat in there is truly sickening

Northern Territory News, General News, 18/03/2026, Lottie Hood, Page 8

A Darwin mum had been in labour for three days when staff at Royal Darwin Hospital were forced to call a Category 1 emergency caesarean after she started declining rapidly and showing signs of sepsis. The Territorian, who has asked not be named, woke up in recovery a few hours later after staff did an "absolutely unbelievably" good job at the end of 2024.

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Wet weather causes Alice Springs Hospital Code Yellow

Northern Territory News, Other, 17/03/2026, Camden Smith

A Code Yellow has been called for Alice Springs Hospital due in part to wet weather and heavy rainfall over the past few days that followed flooding that occurred last month. NT Health issued an alert on Tuesday morning saying Alice Springs Hospital was experiencing "capacity challenges" due to an increase in patient presentations and bed flow pressures, "from ongoing weather events across the region".

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

[Read More](#)

ABC Radio Darwin , Drive, 17/03/2026, Adam Steer

Interview with Chris Hosking, Chief Executive for the NT Department of Health, discussing a Code Yellow called for RDH and Palmerston hospitals. [...] We're pretty stretched at the moment at Royal Darwin and Palmerston and largely it results from some of the response effort to the weather conditions we've been experiencing here in the Territory. So has been a bit of a perfect storm if you pardon the pun. We've had a few things hit us in very quick succession. As you would know we closed the Alice Springs Hospital about 10 days ago and brought all the patients up to Darwin in order to ensure they were safe and sound with the flooding going on in Katherine.

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ABC Radio Darwin , Drive, 17/03/2026, Adam Steer

NT Health says a code yellow is active at Darwin, Palmerston, and Alice Springs hospitals due to a surge in flood-related presentations. The code allows hospitals to cancel elective surgeries and prioritise critical care, while the department urges people with non-urgent issues to visit local GPs.

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[Back to Top](#)

CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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[Back to Top](#)

HEALTH WORKFORCE

Violence against nurses surges

Nursing Review, Other, 17/03/2026, Stefanie Schultz

Violence against nurses, midwives and carers is continuing to rise, with new data revealing both the scale of the problem and the urgent need for better protection for frontline workers. A report released by the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) shows 88 per cent of nurses, midwives and carers surveyed in 2025 had experienced or witnessed violence or aggression in the previous six months, a 10 per cent rise since 2019.

[Read More](#)

Support sessions ease midwife burnout

Nursing Review, Other, 17/03/2026, Stefanie Schultz

Burnout among midwives has reached critical levels in Australia, but new research suggests a structured support program could offer meaningful relief for a workforce under immense strain. A major University of Technology Sydney (UTS) study involving almost 2,000 midwives across 12 public maternity services has found that regular Group Clinical Supervision (GCS) sessions can significantly reduce work-related burnout.

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[Back to Top](#)

Doctors push back on call to subsidise Ozempic for more Australians

9News, Other, 17/03/2026, Jorge Branco

Doctors are pushing back at a Danish company calling for its blockbuster weight-loss drug to be given to obese children. [...] Currently, only people with Type 2 diabetes get subsidised access to the drugs through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

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[Back to Top](#)

MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

NBN Tamworth, NBN News, 17/03/2026, Gavin Morris and Natasha Beyersdorf

According to the National Rural Health Commissioner, AI could transform health care in the northwest by bringing services like X-rays and pathology testing closer to patients. Tamworth Council plans to work with state agencies to expand social and affordable housing by providing land and supporting services.

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ABC North West Qld, Breakfast, 17/03/2026, Danny Kennedy

Pre-recorded interview with Justin Bott, Community Information Officer at Services Australia, about unpaid Medicare benefits in Qld. Bott says almost \$272m is owed to nearly 1m Australians, mostly because people haven't updated their bank details with Medicare. He advises checking and updating details via MyGov or by calling Medicare so the money can be paid within three days.

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[Back to Top](#)

BENEFITS INTEGRITY

Watchdog brings complaints against doctor found guilty of assaulting child

Illawarra Mercury, Other, 17/03/2026, Natalie Croxon

An Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District doctor who assaulted a child has been found guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct. The doctor, who cannot legally be identified, was found guilty following a hearing at a Local Court in 2024 of the domestic violence-related common assault of a minor, but did not receive a conviction.

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[Back to Top](#)

AUSTRALIAN CDC

New hazardous chemical rule to cost \$30bn but could save more

The Australian, General News, 18/03/2026, Ewin Hannan, Page 9

Lowering workplace exposure limits to nine hazardous chemicals, including respirable crystalline silica, would cost employers more than \$30bn across 10 years but the cost would be outweighed by benefits to workers, the public health system and the economy, according to a confidential report prepared for federal and state governments. Safe Work Australia, the national statutory body that develops work health and safety and workers compensation policy, has recommended federal, state and territory work health and safety ministers back the introduction of the lower limits from December 1.

Channel 7, Seven News, 17/03/2026, Rosanna Mangiarelli and Will Goodings

SA's algal bloom crisis escalates politically after claims SA Health gave incorrect advice and delayed warning asthmatics about risks, as revealed by ABC Four Corners. The Chief Public Health Officer Nicola Spurrier denies a cover-up, while the Opposition targets Premier Peter Malinauskas over the government's handling of the situation.

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Channel 10, 10 News, 17/03/2026, Kate Freebairn

SA's handling of the algal bloom crisis faces scrutiny after a Four Corners investigation claims authorities withheld health warnings despite detecting harmful brevetoxins in animals. The state Liberals are calling for an independent inquiry, citing risks to residents with respiratory issues.

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[Back to Top](#)

THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

'No evidence' cannabis treats mental health

The Australian, General News, 18/03/2026, James Dowling, Page 9

A huge Australian study that found no evidence medicinal cannabis was effective for treating PTSD, anxiety and depression should be taken into account by the nation's drug regulator, which is reviewing the use of such products after prescriptions skyrocketed, the lead researcher says. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration is conducting the review after a massive spike in prescriptions through its Special Access Scheme, despite imperfect and incomplete medical evidence.

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

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

Backlash over 'terribly risky' move

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 18/03/2026, Ben Silvester, Page 3

Terang GP Stefanie Hammond says she is deeply worried about the Victorian government plan to put contraceptive pill prescriptions in the hands of pharmacists. [...] She emphasised that wasn't just her opinion, but the official advice from Australia's federal regulatory body the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

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NeuroScientific readies stem cell supply boost for bowel disease trials

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 17/03/2026, Doug Bright

NeuroScientific Biopharmaceuticals has ticked off another key box on the road to commercialising the company's StemSmart stem cell therapy, kicking off its first manufacturing run at one of Australia's leading cell therapy facilities in Brisbane. [...] The company expects the entire technology transfer program to run through several structured stages, including process mapping, documentation transfer, analytical testing validation and finally, a regulatory inspection by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

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

[Read More](#)

No evidence medicinal cannabis treats mental illnesses, major review finds

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 17/03/2026, Sarah Booth

There is no evidence to support medicinal cannabis treatment for most mental illnesses, placing Australia's lucrative industry under scrutiny. [...] The new review comes as the Therapeutic Goods Administration is in the middle of reviewing the regulations for medicinal cannabis due to safety concerns about the use of unapproved products (which covers virtually all medicinal cannabis products in Australia).

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

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Scientists up-end mental health case for medical weed

West Australian, Other, 17/03/2026, Will Nicholas

Routine medical marijuana use for mental health issues is rarely justified, a groundbreaking Australian study has found. [...] The vast majority of cannabis medications available to Australians have not been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the national drug regulator.

[Read More](#)

Medicinal cannabis concerns half-baked, advocates say

Canberra Times, Other, 17/03/2026, Tom Wark and Will Nicholas

Calls to scrap medicinal cannabis for mental health treatment are premature, advocates say, as an Australian study casts doubt on the drug's effectiveness. [...] That is consistent with worldwide trends, with recreational and medical use rising in recent decades as more nations legalise cannabis, a 2024 study found More than 99 per cent of all medicinal cannabis products prescribed in Australia have not been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the national drug regulator.

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[Back to Top](#)

OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

Mental health potshots

Courier Mail, General News, 18/03/2026, Sarah Booth, Page 3

There is no evidence to support medicinal cannabis treatment for mental illnesses, including anxiety, depression and PTSD, a landmark review has found placing the lucrative industry under scrutiny. But despite Australian researchers finding, if anything, the drug may actually worsen outcomes, hundreds of thousands of medicinal cannabis approvals have been granted including for children in Australia for such conditions.

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Pot luck or medicine?

Hobart Mercury, General News, 18/03/2026, Page 11

The largest-ever review of the safety and efficacy of cannabinoids across a range of mental health conditions has found no evidence that medicinal cannabis is effective in treating anxiety, depression or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The study, which included The University of Sydney researchers, comes amid more than one million prescription approvals and a tripling of sales of cannabinoid medications in Australia over the past four years, often for the treatment of mental health and substance-use disorders.

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Fight over half-baked medicinal cannabis claims

West Australian, General News, 18/03/2026, Page 7

Calls to scrap medicinal cannabis for mental health treatment are premature, advocates say, as an Australian study casts doubt on the drug's effectiveness. More than one million Australians have used medicinal cannabis at some stage, mostly in the past five years, for managing conditions including depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance use disorders.

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Medicinal cannabis could be doing 'more harm than good' for mental health conditions

9News, Other, 17/03/2026, Maddison Leach

Medicinal cannabis use has exploded in Australia in recent years, but it could be doing "more harm than good" for some Australians, new research suggests. In the last four years alone, more than one million prescriptions have been approved and the sales of cannabinoid medications have tripled in Australia.

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

[Read More](#)

Channel 10, 10 News, 17/03/2026, Sandra Sully

Medicinal cannabis use is rising sharply in Australia, but a University of Sydney study finds no evidence it helps treat anxiety, depression, or PTSD and warns of potential long-term harms. The research suggests it may still provide benefits for conditions like autism, insomnia, and Tourette's syndrome.

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ABC Radio Adelaide, Evenings, 17/03/2026, Spence Denny

Interview with Dr Jack Wilson, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, about the effectiveness of medicinal cannabis for mental health conditions. Wilson says evidence shows limited and low-quality support for benefits in conditions like Tourette syndrome, insomnia, and autism, while finding no convincing effectiveness for anxiety, depression, or PTSD. He warns of potential long-term harms and urges stronger evidence and regulation as the industry grows.

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

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[Back to Top](#)

FOOD STANDARDS

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