



# TODAY'S NEWS

Friday, 20th March 2026

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## LINKS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Age](#)** (page 2) reports that GPs have raised concerns about Victoria's expansion of pharmacist prescribing powers, citing 64 cases of alleged misdiagnoses submitted to Safer Care Victoria. A Victorian Government spokesperson said the policy has been safe in practice and improves access, noting that "care at the chemist works and it's women who are reaping the benefits".
- **[The Daily Telegraph](#)** (page 19) reports that Sydney's measles outbreak has resulted in 33 confirmed cases of measles which have been detected in the city's western and northern suburbs.
- **[The Adelaide Advertiser](#)** (page 8) reports that ahead of the SA election, the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association is calling for all parties to support an expansion of nurse prescribing.
- **[The Northern Territory News](#)** (page 7) reports that NT Health chief executive Chris Hosking has warned hospitals face prolonged Code Yellows as Cyclone Narelle intensifies.
- **[7News.com.au](#)** (online) reports that Victorian health authorities are warning people who have flu-like symptoms to seek urgent medical care as an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in Melbourne's outer north has resulted in six confirmed cases.

### **MP slams shock call to close autism centre**

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 20/03/2026, Nikita McGuire, Page 19

Following the devastating closure of a Townsville specialist centre for children with autism, federal member for Herbert Phillip Thompson said he would be heading to Canberra to get answers for the families and staff left stranded. [...] Mr Thompson said he had reached out to Health and NDIS Minister Mark Butler and offered a stark warning if his concerns continue to remain unanswered, saying it "wasn't good enough".

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

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### **Health insurance premiums to hike as much as 25 per cent, CHOICE analysis shows**

ABC Online, Other, 19/03/2026, Paige Cockburn and Stephanie Dalzell

Millions of Australians could see their private health insurance premiums rise by as much as 25 per cent next month, according to analysis from the country's leading consumer advocacy group. Health Minister Mark Butler recently approved a 4.41 per cent average health insurance premium increase from April, the highest rise in almost a decade.

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### **Your health insurance could soon skyrocket by 25 per cent, here's why**

Canberra Times, Other, 19/03/2026, Desiree Savage

Some of the nation's biggest private health insurers could push their premiums up to 25 per cent higher from April 1, as found by independent review by consumer group CHOICE. [...] Earlier in March, Minister for Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, announced a 4.41 per cent increase for average policies, but Mr Blades of CHOICE believes this will not reflect the "true cost" many will face.

[Read More](#)

### **CHOICE health insurance analysis reveals some West Aussies could face \$100 more monthly for top coverage**

West Australian, Other, 19/03/2026

Health funds are hiking prices higher than ever, new consumer analysis has revealed, with one fund's top policy set to slug West Australians who need health cover the most almost \$100 extra each month. [...] From April 1, four of the five biggest insurers will hit members with more than double the average 4.41 per cent premium hike endorsed by Federal Health Minister Mark Butler last month, which in itself is the largest average rise since 2017.

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### **HELF: the aged care fee was always going to explode**

The Weekly Source, Other, 19/03/2026, Lauren Broomham

Providers have been told to stop cross-subsidising care. [...] Mark Butler has said it. IHACPA has reinforced it and now the new Aged Care Act has embedded it in the system.

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### **Government announces national women's health pharmacy prescribing trial**

WEB Australasian Pharmacy, Other, 19/03/2026

Australia is set to overhaul access to women's healthcare, with the Federal Government today unveiling a national women's health pharmacy prescribing trial aimed at improving timely access to contraception and treatment for uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs). [...] PGA's National President Professor Trent Twomey welcomed the announcement made by Federal Health Minister Hon

Mark Butler MP, saying it confirms what communities already experience daily: pharmacists are among Australia's most accessible frontline primary healthcare providers.

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## Private Health Insurance Premiums Set to Surge Next Month

WEB OZ Arab Media, Other, 19/03/2026

Millions of Australians could see their private health insurance premiums rise by as much as 25 per cent next month, according to analysis from the country's leading consumer advocacy group. [...] The recent approval of a 4.41 per cent average premium increase by Health Minister Mark Butler marks the highest rise in almost a decade.

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## ABC Radio Adelaide, Evenings, 19/03/2026, Spence Denny

Millions of Australians could see their private health insurance premiums rise by as much as 25 per cent next month, according to analysis from CHOICE. This is despite Health Minister Mark Butler recently approving only a 4.4 per cent increase on average to health insurance premiums from April, the highest rise in almost a decade. The leading consumer advocacy group has released an analysis of the big five health funds, including Bupa, HBF, HCF, Medibank, and NIB, and found that some policyholders will pay up to five times more than the announced increase.

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## MINISTER MCALLISTER

### Federal police raid Sydney home of suspected NDIS scam syndicate 'middle manager'

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 19/03/2026, Julie Cross

Federal police raided a home and forensically searched a car linked to a suspected "middle manager" of a large scale criminal syndicate allegedly involved in \$3.5 million NDIS scam. [...] NDIS Minister Jenny McAllister said operations to crack down on fraud are running 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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

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## MINISTER RAE

### Aged care 'supergroup' warns reforms will cost older Australians more for same services

The Mercury, Other, 19/03/2026, Julie Cross

A powerful new "supergroup" of 40 aged care organisations is warning that upcoming reforms are an expensive mistake, which could see older Australians charged more for the exact same services. [...] Minister for Aged Care and Seniors Sam Rae, who has been sent a letter from the alliance, said he was still working through what the CHSP transition would look like.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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## DEPARTMENT

### **Listen to your body: 5 signs to switch up your workout**

Coach Nine, Other, 19/03/2026, Franki Hobson

Movement should make you feel good about yourself, not like a punishment. [...] The Department of Health and Aged Care recommends balancing aerobic and resistance training with rest, recovery and gentle movement to support hormonal health and long-term wellbeing.

[Read More](#)

### **How New Zealand made indefinite(ish) referrals a reality**

The Medical Republic, Other, 19/03/2026, Holly Payne

The AMA has warned against extending referral validity periods, but the medical software industry is all for it. There is a middle path. If the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing was hoping for unanimous advice from the medical sphere on how to modernise referral pathways, it will be sorely disappointed.

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## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### **Steel weighing up retirement village let-off**

Canberra Times, General News, 20/03/2026, Georgina Sebar, Page 5

Developers hoping to build retirement villages in the ACT could avoid the additional cost of the developer licensing scheme. Planning and Sustainable Development Minister Chris Steel said he would "take on board" suggestions that retirement village operators should be exempt from the scheme in order to encourage developers.

Also reported by: [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#).

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### **Sink or swim?**

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 20/03/2026, Jessica Greenan, Page 1

Despite grim findings that surfaced, the Rodney Grove Aquatic Centre could still make a comeback. A federal government change to aged care funding, on top of annual operating losses of \$100,000 since opening in 2011, finally saw the pool "go under".

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

### **National project amplifies carer voices**

A new national research project is calling on Australians who care for older people living with mental health conditions to share their stories, in an effort to challenge stigma and advocate for stronger support. Silverchain and Carers Victoria launched Carer Voices earlier this month, a digital-storytelling initiative designed to give carers a platform to speak openly about the realities of supporting older adults living with mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.

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## **New CHSP Alliance calls for aged care restructure**

Australian Seniors News, Other, 19/03/2026

A new alliance of aged care bodies is calling for the retention of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and its redevelopment as the primary tier of Australia's aged care system. The CHSP Alliance has been established by 40 prominent organisations and individuals representing consumers, unions, health professionals, home support providers and researchers.

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## **Soiled beds, open sores and residents tied to chairs, regulator closes aged care facility**

HelloCare, Other, 19/03/2026, Jakob Neeland

A specialist supported accommodation facility in Melbourne's east has been forced to shut its doors after repeated findings of residents with dementia being restrained, left in squalid conditions and suffering untreated wounds. Greenslopes Supported Residential Service (SRS) in Templestowe Lower housed up to 40 vulnerable people, many living with cognitive impairment or mental health conditions.

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## **KPMG: Top 25 home care providers hold share as market fragments**

The Weekly Source, Other, 19/03/2026, Lauren Broomham

The top 25 home care providers account for 40.5% of total funding, according to KPMG's 2026 Aged Care Market Analysis – a share that has stabilised after several years of decline. Australian Unity has retained the top spot with \$720.9 million in Government funding and a 7.

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## **Top 25 residential providers tighten grip on aged care beds: KPMG**

The Weekly Source, Other, 19/03/2026, Lauren Broomham

The top 25 residential aged care providers now operate 46.4% of all residential places, up from 44.7% last year, according to KPMG's 2026 Aged Care Market Analysis. The 18-page report, released today (19 March), reveals that as of 30 June 2025 there were 636 providers, down from 642 a year earlier, while the number of homes also declined slightly.

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## **Providers submitting 500 governance documents as aged care audits commence**

The Weekly Source, Other, 19/03/2026, Caroline Egan

The aged care regulator began its first residential aged care audits under the new Aged Care Act this week, and it quickly became clear there is confusion about provider requirements. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC) hosted a webinar on Tuesday (17 March), titled Varying and Renewing Provider Registration.

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# DISABILITY AND CARERS

## **Inaction putting boys life at risk**

A severely disabled child living in foster care has been repeatedly subjected to "life threatening" conditions after the scandal-ridden Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) botched a bathroom modification, causing catastrophic seizures and forcing his elderly carer to shower him lying down on the cold bathroom floor surrounded by mould.

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

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## Winning vision

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 20/03/2026, Ben Cameron, Page 1

A City of Greater Geelong vision to create an AllAbilities Institute in Geelong which could form part of a multimillion-dollar tennis revamp in Armstrong Creek is expected to take its first steps forward in coming weeks. The city plans to host a special forum about the idea with the National Disability Insurance Scheme, WorkSafe and Leisure Networks and a host of other providers considered as possible attendees to share ideas.

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## Disturbing photos emerge after Aussie discovers her son bruised and bloodied in an NDIS-supported home in Western Australia

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 19/03/2026, Maisy Rae

Police are investigating after a young disabled man was left bloodied and bruised after being allegedly assaulted while in the care of support workers at an NDIS home. Corey Wooller, who lives with severe autism and is non-verbal, was allegedly attacked in an NDIS-supported house in Western Australia just before Christmas

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## Channel 7, Sunrise 5AM News, 19/03/2026, Monique Wright

We are about to see shocking injuries that a young disabled man allegedly received while living in an NDIS-supported home. The injuries were discovered when his mother made an unexpected visit. She found him sitting alone, covered in cuts and bruises, with no medical help. These photos are shocking. A vulnerable man who lives with severe autism attacked at home, in a supported house where he should have been safe.

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## PRIMARY CARE

### Doctors' dossier reveals medical blunders made by pharmacists

Age, General News, 20/03/2026, Henrietta Cook, Page 2

GPs have intensified their opposition to the Victorian government's expansion of pharmacist prescribing powers, releasing a dossier of 64 alleged blunders involving pharmacists misdiagnosing patients. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) presented the examples which include patients being prescribed antibiotics to treat suspected urinary tract infections that turned out to be herpes and cancer to the state's healthcare watchdog Safer Care Victoria yesterday.

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### Chemists are not doctors

Courier Mail, General News, 20/03/2026, Elizabeth Jackson, Page 27

Australia is currently debating major reforms to scope-of-practice laws and pharmacy prescribing. These proposals are framed as solutions to workforce shortages and access barriers in primary care.

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## Royal Flying Doctor Service WA makes more than 2500 patient retrievals in the Kimberley in 2025

West Australian, Other, 19/03/2026, Cain Andrews

Royal Flying Doctor Service crews completed 2619 patient retrievals in the Kimberley in 2025 — 42 more than in the previous year — according to the service's latest annual report. The Deloitte Access Economics report also found the RFDS responded to a record 10,578 patient retrievals across WA in 2025 — amounting to an average of 29 calls for assistance every day.

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## Report shows Royal Flying Doctor Service continues to provide critical service for thousands

West Australian, Other, 19/03/2026, Rose Patane

A new independent report has found the Royal Flying Doctor Service is delivering double the value of funding invested into it, with the South West seeing an increase in patients retrieved in a 12-month period. Data from the Deloitte Access Economics report released in January found the RFDS was essential to providing health care for more than 20,000 people across regional WA each year.

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## 2CC, Canberra Live, 19/03/2026, Leon Delaney

Interview with RACGP ACT chair Dr Rebekah Hoffman. The RACGP has submitted its pre-budget submission to the ACT Government and suggested that more direct investment in general practise would go a long way towards relieving pressure on overstretched emergency departments and other hospital services. Hoffman says having state governments contribute to general practise through workforce initiatives and other sustainable measures is in the best interest of the public since the majority of health care needs to be done in general practise.

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## 2CC, Canberra Live, 19/03/2026, Leon Delaney

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has delivered its pre-budget submission to the ACT Government and argued that pressure on overstretched emergency departments will only get worse unless there is targeted investment in GP services.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

### How boosting vaccinations could prevent meningitis outbreak in Australia

ABC Online, Other, 19/03/2026, Fergus Gregg

A growing outbreak of meningococcal B and meningitis has killed two young people in the UK. [...] Long-lasting effects According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, up to one in 10 patients with meningococcal disease will die and up to one in five surviving patients will suffer from long-term health problems.

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### Dentist reveals why you should NEVER ignore these common oral cancer signs: 'Don't wait'

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 19/03/2026, Elise Wilson

A dentist has issued a stark warning about the early signs of oral cancer that many Australians are unknowingly brushing off. [...] According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, survival rates for oral cancer are significantly higher when the disease is detected early, but drop sharply once it progresses.

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## The bleak reason smoking is 'back' has zero to do with cool.

Mamamia, Other, 19/03/2026, Catie Powers

Outside a suburban coffee shop, a woman in her 50s lights up, exhaling with a weary sort of satisfaction. Down the street, a 21-year-old in chunky shoes takes a puff on his way home from uni.

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## Not lovin' it: Fast food ads driving childhood obesity

Medical Forum, Other, 19/03/2026

West Australian children are relentlessly targeted by fast food marketing at school, at sporting events and on their screens creating an environment "stacked against their health". New research by Cancer Council WA found fast food brands have a pervasive presence in communities, ensuring that the food and drinks they sell are the most available, accessible, promoted, and recognised by children.

[Read More](#)

## Channel 10, 10 News, 19/03/2026, Jennifer Keyte

The AFP will be given stronger powers under major reforms to crack down on the booming illegal tobacco trade across Australia. The Federal Government is also considering a ban on standalone tobacconists, which could mean legal cigarettes would only be sold at supermarkets. New offences, which are yet to be announced, will be introduced to the federal parliament. The Federal Opposition wants similar reforms applied to illegal vapes.

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## CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

### Humble ultrasound a lifesaver

The Australian, General News, 20/03/2026, Stephen Lunn, Page 9

When someone suffers a heart attack and survives, the race is on to limit damage to their heart muscles. There will inevitably be some, but just how much will affect the person's chances of another cardiac arrest and future quality of life.

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

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### The terrifying hospital 'fire' that wasn't there: Graham's story

Canberra Times, Other, 19/03/2026, Carla Mascarenhas

Evelyn Rigney knows all too well the impact of delirium. In July 2011, her sister Eileen and brother-in-law Graham Smith travelled from Townsville to attend a wedding in Tweed Heads. Two days later, Graham fell while out walking alone, breaking his arm.

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### Menopause is no longer just a women's issue, according to health experts

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 19/03/2026, Lauren Ahwan

Menopause is no longer seen as just a women's issue, with partners, family members, friends and even work colleagues all playing a vital support role to those navigating hormonal changes. Knowing the symptoms of menopause and encouraging women to seek treatment, if required, is one of the most important things loved ones can do to help women through their menopause journey, says Priceline Pharmacy franchise partner Geoff Hope.

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

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## Channel 9, Nine News, 19/03/2026, Brenton Ragless

Australian doctors are hoping a low-cost drug already used to treat gout could help combat peripheral artery disease, which affects one in five older Australians. A new trial is using the medication to target blocked arteries to save lives and limbs. The anti-inflammatory medication called colchicine has been shown to benefit the heart in low doses, but its effects on the limbs are now the focus of the trial to prevent complications. The study is funded by the government's Medical Research Future Fund.

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## ABC Radio Darwin , Drive, 19/03/2026, Adam Steer

Interview with NT Attorney-General Marie-Clare Boothby. The NT Government has announced it will be introducing VAD legislation into Parliament before the middle of the year. Boothby says they are working very hard with the Opposition to bring the legislation to parliament by July. She highlights that they will apply a conscious vote for this legislation, which means that the vote reflects the interests of the community represented by every politician.

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## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

### National project amplifies carer voices

Aged Care Insite, Other, 19/03/2026, Stefanie Schultz

A new national research project is calling on Australians who care for older people living with mental health conditions to share their stories, in an effort to challenge stigma and advocate for stronger support. Silverchain and Carers Victoria launched Carer Voices earlier this month, a digital-storytelling initiative designed to give carers a platform to speak openly about the realities of supporting older adults living with mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety.

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## IMMUNISATION

### How boosting vaccinations could prevent meningitis outbreak in Australia

ABC Online, Other, 19/03/2026, Fergus Gregg

A growing outbreak of meningococcal B and meningitis has killed two young people in the UK. [...] Long-lasting effects According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, up to one in 10 patients with meningococcal disease will die and up to one in five surviving patients will suffer from long-term health problems.

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

### Peanut butter bonus

Maintaining independence in older adults could be as simple as a tablespoon of peanut butter a day, according to the latest Deakin University research. A world-first clinical trial by researchers at Deakin's Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN) found that participants who ate a heaped tablespoon of natural peanut butter daily for six months increased protein intake and gained muscle power.

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## Surprising finding about meat consumption and dementia

The Australian, Other, 20/03/2026, Penny Timms

It's news sure to delight carnivores the world over, with a small study suggesting a distinct group of people could benefit from a diet higher in meat. Just be sure to read the fine print.

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## ASX healthcare firms deepen university ties to advance new treatments

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 19/03/2026, Nadine McGrath

Partnerships between universities and industry are a major driver of medical innovation, with ASX-listed healthcare companies increasingly collaborating with higher education institutions to develop new therapies. Universities often license breakthrough research from their labs, securing funding to continue their work.

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

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### NT behind on Closing Gap targets

Northern Territory News, General News, 20/03/2026, Fia Walsh, Page 13

The Northern Territory has performed the worst in the nation for progress on Closing the Gap targets, going backwards on makers including female life expectancy, child development and employment. The latest update of the Productivity Commission's Closing the Gap Dashboard, which measures progress towards the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, has added a new year of data for six of the socioeconomic targets and 20 supporting indicators.

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

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### New RAP reinforces commitment to Indigenous health equity: PSA

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 19/03/2026

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is marking Close the Gap Day by launching its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Also reported by: [Pharmacy Daily \(Online\)](#), [Retail Pharmacy \(Online\)](#).

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### Five years on, inquest confirms health system failures contributed to the preventable death of First Nations woman Eve Brown

National Indigenous Times, Other, 19/03/2026, Giovanni Torre

The family of Eve Brown, a First Nations woman who died at the Lightning Ridge Multi Purpose Health Service in New South Wales in July 2021, received coronial findings on Thursday which confirmed critical failures in recognising and responding to her deteriorating condition contributed to her preventable death. Deputy State Coroner Harriet Grahame found Ms Brown, aged 42, died after presenting seriously unwell to LRMPHS and not receiving timely investigation, escalation or transfer to an appropriately resourced hospital.

## Closing the Gap data sparks calls for overhaul of 'failing' policies

National Indigenous Times, Other, 19/03/2026, Dechlan Brennan

Governments are being urged to abandon fear narratives and return to evidence-based approaches, with advocacy bodies warning the latest Closing the Gap data reflects the "daily reality" for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Data released this week by the Productivity Commission shows only four targets are on track to be met, with five improving but not on track and two showing no change.

Also reported by: [National Indigenous Times \(Online\)](#).

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## Aboriginal advisory committee to guide Rural Health West strategy

National Indigenous Times, Other, 19/03/2026, Dechlan Brennan

Expert advice from Aboriginal people is set to shape health policy and service delivery across Western Australia, with Rural Health West establishing its first Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC). The committee has been formed to ensure Aboriginal voices inform the organisation's work with communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), and the broader health workforce.

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## ABC News, ABC National News, 19/03/2026, Joe O'Brien

The percentage of Indigenous babies born at a healthy birth weight has not improved in nine years, according to the latest update on the Closing the Gap targets. Experts say there is evidence that bespoke services led by the community are the key to success. The Federal Government has recently announced \$44.4 million in funding for ten Birthing on Country services, with 75 per cent of the funding committed to Aboriginal Community Controlled Services. Birth weight and life expectancy are two of the 19 Closing the Gap targets that are not on track to be met.

Also reported by: [ABC News \(Sydney\)](#).

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## PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

### Phone call answered

Hobart Mercury, General News, 20/03/2026, Bridget Clarke, Page 5

Cancer Council Tasmania stepped in to purchase a phone for the oncology unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital after the state health department refused to provide about \$100 to fund it. The Mercury understands staff within the unit engaged in back-and-forth correspondence with the Tasmanian Department of Health in an attempt to secure funding for a cordless phone for patients in the hospital's inpatient oncology unit.

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### Cyclone sparks hospital warning

Northern Territory News, General News, 20/03/2026, Lottie Hood, Page 7

With struggling staff and major hospitals at capacity, an NT Health official has warned of prolonged Code Yellows as Cyclone Narelle ramps up. A Code Yellow was called at Alice Springs Hospital on Tuesday morning in response to capacity issues" as flooding hit the town.

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### Rehab robot helps WA kids

West Australian, General News, 20/03/2026, Claire Sadler, Page 9

Perth Children's Hospital will be the first in Australia to get access to a ground-breaking rehabilitation

robot, meaning more kids in the State can learn to walk again. The ZeroG 3D robot is a computer-controlled harness system that partially supports a child's weight and tracks them as they walk, balance, and practise everyday movements.

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

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## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

### **ABC Radio Sydney, Mornings, 19/03/2026, Hamish Macdonald**

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association has welcomed the rollout of one to three midwife ratios in seven postnatal maternity wards across the state. The safe staffing policy will be rolled out in seven postnatal wards at major hospitals in Western and Southwestern Sydney and John Hunter Hospital.

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### **Nurses want to write script for election**

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 20/03/2026, Brad Crouch, Page 8

The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association is calling on all parties to support an expansion of nurse prescribing ahead of the state election. APNA president Denise Lyons said South Australia's health sector faces increasing challenges, including a shortage of health professionals and rising chronic disease.

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### **Investigation into comments about departure of surgeon**

Border Mail, General News, 20/03/2026, Hana Humboldt, Page 3

An Albury councillor is reportedly being investigated for comments made about the termination of a Border surgeon. Albury deputy mayor Jessica Kellahan is the focus of an investigation regarding a possible breach of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW.

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### **More maternity staff on way**

Newcastle Herald, General News, 20/03/2026, Damon Cronshaw, Page 2

A Newcastle midwife with 30 years' experience says more staff in maternity units will mean "we can give more support to mums and babies". "We won't be so flat out, stressed and burnt out," said Denise Davidson, who works in postnatal maternity at John Hunter Hospital.

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### **Heart surgeries in Tasmania reduced from daily to two a week amid indefinite industrial action**

ABC Online, Other, 19/03/2026, Madeleine Rojahn

Tasmania's health department has been forced to reduce what are normally daily heart surgeries due to strike action from "vital" cardiac specialists. Open heart surgeries for heart disease usually take place on an elective basis once a day, often extending to two a day when there are emergencies.

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### **Unions call for lower limits for 9 toxic chemicals**

Australian Nursing & Midwifery Journal, Other, 19/03/2026

Unions, including the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), are calling on Work Health

and Safety Ministers to strengthen protections for workers – including nurses – by lowering the exposure limits for nine "cancer-causing" toxic chemicals. The ANMF, together with the ACTU and other public health organisations, sent a joint letter urging WHS Ministers to adopt recommendations made by the national regulator, Safe Work Australia, to lower workplace exposure limits for the nine hazardous chemicals.

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## Medical student takes fight against UOW to the Supreme Court

Illawarra Mercury, Other, 19/03/2026, Natalie Croxon

A postgraduate medical student has successfully fought a University of Wollongong decision to ban him from its campuses and electronic systems following allegations of misconduct. UOW placed a temporary block on Simon Carter's access to the university and its electronic systems in August 2025, after UOW's Safe and Respectful Communities (SARC) team received a number of complaints about Mr Carter's alleged behaviour.

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## ABC Radio Hobart, Drive, 19/03/2026, Lucy Breaden and Kylie Baxter

Interview with AMA Tasmania president Dr Michael Lumsden-Steel. Cardiac surgeries in Tasmania have been reduced to two a week as industrial action continues over pay negotiations. Lumsden-Steel says the state government should resolve the wage issues with three cardiac perfusionists and other health staff instead of relying on locums, noting that they are critical for patient safety and outcomes.

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## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

### Middle East conflict unlikely to fuel immediate meds shortages: Guild

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 19/03/2026

Pharmacy Guild of Australia national president, Professor Trent Twomey, is advising patients not to stockpile medicines in response to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

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## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

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## AUSTRALIAN CDC

### Measles outbreak surging

Daily Telegraph, General News, 20/03/2026, Emma Kirk, Page 19

Sydney is grappling with its worst measles outbreak in years, as the number of confirmed cases soars to 33 after more confirmed cases were detected in the city's western and northern suburbs. Two new

cases were acquired locally after people attended an exposure site at the same time as an infected person earlier this month.

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

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## Legionnaires' outbreak in Melbourne's north sparks urgent health alert from authorities

7News.com.au, Other, 19/03/2026, Molly Rose Magennis

An outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in Melbourne's outer north has prompted a major health warning from authorities. Six people who have spent time in Craigieburn and the surrounding suburbs have contracted the lung infection and spent time in hospital as of March 18, 2026.

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## How boosting vaccinations could prevent meningitis outbreak in Australia

ABC Online, Other, 19/03/2026, Fergus Gregg

A growing outbreak of meningococcal B and meningitis has killed two young people in the UK. [...] Long-lasting effects According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, up to one in 10 patients with meningococcal disease will die and up to one in five surviving patients will suffer from long-term health problems.

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## 2GB, Drive, 19/03/2026, Clinton Maynard

Another three cases of measles have been confirmed in Sydney amid a growing outbreak linked to travellers returning from Southeast Asia. Two of the new cases visited an identified exposure site, but health officials are still working to trace where the third patient contracted it.

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# THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

## Jobs at medical cannabis giant go up in smoke

The Australian, General News, 20/03/2026, James Dowling, Page 9

Employees sacked by Australia's biggest medicinal cannabis company say its medical affairs team has been gutted, raising concerns for regulatory compliance in the face of an impending prescription regime overhaul and failed court-ordered mediation over alleged unlawful advertising. [...] Montu was taken to the Federal Court in April 2024 by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for alleged advertising contraventions, after which, employees said, the company focused on cleaning up its image and complying with the TGA.

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

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## Australia's huge workforce crisis exposed

Adelaide Now, Other, 19/03/2026, Bek Day

Australia is grappling with a growing workforce crisis that's costing \$10 billion and it's part of a larger problem facing many women. [...] The TGA has previously advised doctors to avoid starting new patients on patches to preserve existing stock for those already stabilised on the treatment...

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

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## Psychedelics may be no better than antidepressants for depression:

## studies

ABC Online, Other, 19/03/2026

Prescriptions for psychedelic drugs and cannabis are on the rise in Australia, particularly for treatment of mental health disorders like depression. [...] The TGA rescheduled psilocybin and MDMA in 2023 , making it easier for patients to access the drugs as medicines.

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## How the Middle East conflict could disrupt Australia's pharmaceutical supply

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 19/03/2026, Nicholas Comino

Vital medicine shipments bound for Australia have been diverted away from the Strait of Hormuz as the escalating Middle East crisis disrupts global supply chains, with the government monitoring the situation closely. [...] Pharmaceutical supply is already an issue in Australia, with the Therapeutic Goods Administration listing shortages of almost 400 medicines, prior to the conflict exploding.

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## ABC Radio Perth, Mornings, 19/03/2026, Nadia Mitsopoulos

Interview with Dr Megan Pricor from Melbourne Law School. Pricor discusses AI scribes, noting that doctors need to meticulously check the draft output of the scribe to ensure serious errors are not making their way into people's medical records. She urges TGA to regulate AI scribes in terms of safety and quality before they hit the market.

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## OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

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## FOOD STANDARDS

### Cheese pulled from shelves at Coles, IGA over undeclared allergen

9News, Other, 19/03/2026, Emily McPherson

An urgent product recall has been issued for a "dairy-free" cheese sold nationally at Coles supermarkets and independent retailers such as IGA. Although the BioCheese Cheddar Shred is marketed as a non-dairy product, some packets of the product were found to contain milk, Food Standards Australia said.

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### Major blunder as 'dairy-free' product containing milk urgently recalled from two major supermarkets

Sky News Australia, Other, 19/03/2026, Preston Potts

Two major supermarkets have urgently recalled a "dairy-free" product that contains traces of milk, posing a risk to consumers. [...] The warning issued by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand stated that in the affected products there is a presence of an undeclared allergen of milk.

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### Food recall: BioCheese Cheddar Shred sold at Coles and IGA urgently pulled from shelves

West Australian, Other, 19/03/2026, Peta Rasdien

A popular cheese item sold at Coles and IGA stores across Australia has been pulled from shelves after the nation's food watchdog ordered a recall. [...] BioCheese Cheddar Shred Credit: FSANZ "Any

consumers who have a milk allergy or intolerance may have a reaction if the product is consumed," a Food Standards Australia and New Zealand recall alert reads.

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## AICIS

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