



TODAY'S NEWS

Monday, 30th 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](#) |
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Australian Financial Review](#)** (page 1) reports the AMA and pharmaceutical manufacturers have raised concerns regarding inequity of access to weight-loss medications, noting that residents in regional areas are 34 per cent less likely to purchase these treatments. Health Minister Mark Butler is expected to address whether the Federal Government should broaden access to these drugs through the PBS.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 1) reports a group of 63 senior members of the medical research and scientific community has written an open letter to Ministers Butler, McAllister, and Rae urging the Federal Government to increase investment in research funding.
- **[The Daily Telegraph](#)** (page 3) reports the RACGP and the Australian Society of Psychiatrists have warned that a lack of coordination between private and public health sectors is leaving thousands of vulnerable patients without essential mental health care, resulting in high-risk individuals spending days in emergency departments.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 6) reports research published in the Medical Journal of Australia indicates that deaths from motor neurone disease have tripled since 1986, with experts noting that mortality rates are significantly higher in regional areas.
- **[ABC Online](#)** reports the Federal Government is preparing to launch the first phase of the Thriving Kids program in October. Mark Butler stated that the final design of the four billion

dollar initiative will be settled following bilateral agreements with states and territories, utilizing community hubs and schools to deliver services and reduce pressure on the National Disability Insurance Agency.

MINISTER BUTLER

Subsidise weight-loss drugs, says big pharma

Australian Financial Review, General News, 30/03/2026, Michael Smith, Page 1

Global pharmaceutical giants stepped up pressure on the Albanese government to subsidise weight-loss drugs, releasing data showing people in Sydney's west and regional areas are 34 per cent less likely to buy the medicines than affluent city residents.

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

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Urgent call to reverse nation's brain drain

The Australian, General News, 30/03/2026, Stephen Lunn, Page 1

Some of Australia's best minds, including three Nobel Prize winners, are urging the Albanese government to show leadership and repair research funding immediately or risk the nation's future. As other countries take leaps in technology and innovation, 63 senior members of the medical research and scientific community have written an open letter to Health Minister Mark Butler in a significant escalation of the push to rescue Australia's research effort and stop our greatest talent and ideas going overseas.

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

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Retain brightest research minds

The Australian, Editorials, 30/03/2026, Page 10

The clarion call from 63 of Australia's best medical researchers and scientists, including three Nobel laureates, urging the Albanese government to repair a \$350m shortfall in research funding in the May budget, should be heeded. In a letter to Health Minister Mark Butler, they warn Australia is at risk of generating ideas for others to develop, exporting capability and future industries.

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

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Labor war-games fuel curb

Australian Financial Review, General News, 30/03/2026, Phillip Coorey, Peter Ker & Ronald Mizen, Page 1

Australia's big miners have asked the competition watchdog for permission to collaborate on fuel security strategies and national cabinet will war-game more drastic measures to shore up supplies such as fuel rationing as the conflict in the Middle East enters its fifth week.

Also reported by: [Australian Financial Review \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [The Guardian \(Online\)](#).

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Doctors and politicians call for scrutiny of common procedure after patient horror

The Australian, Other, 29/03/2026, Paul Garvey

Naomi can vividly recall the moment she thought she was going to die. [...] Coalition health spokeswoman Anne Ruston and Greens leader Larissa Waters have both written to Health Minister Mark Butler to call for more to be done to address the issue.

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Leading cancer drug subsidised for thousands of patients

Adelaide Now, Other, 29/03/2026, Charles Chadwick

Australians suffering from advanced and high-risk cancers will pay thousands of dollars less for their treatment after the Albanese government expanded the listing of a leading immunotherapy drug on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said the expanded listing meant patients could get the treatment they needed faster and at an affordable price.

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

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This 'one stop shop' for families says its model could be scaled up for Thriving Kids

ABC Online, Other, 29/03/2026, Nas Campanella & Evan Young

It's all happening at this community centre in Frankston North in outer Melbourne. [...] In a statement, federal NDIS Minister Mark Butler said the final design of Thriving Kids would be settled soon after all states and territories signed bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth.

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Channel 10, 10 News (Weekend), 29/03/2026, Georgie Tunny

The Federal Government is expanding the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, from next month, more patients are going to be eligible for the drug Keytruda. Health Minister Mark Butler says the drug is an immunotherapy that helps the body fight, target, and then fight cancer cells.

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Channel 7, Seven News (Weekend), 29/03/2026, Mike Smithson

The PBS will expand coverage of immunotherapy drug Keytruda to include three more cancer types. Health Minister Mark Butler says the drug is considered one of the most extraordinary drugs in Australia. Starting April 1st, more than 10,000 people will have access to it.

[Play Now](#)

Channel 9, National Nine News (Sunday), 29/03/2026, Will McDonald & Alice Monfries

More than 10,000 Australians dealing with cancer are about to save thousands of dollars, with Health Minister Mark Butler announcing the expansion of Keytruda coverage on the PBS to cover cancer spreading beyond the cervix, kidney cancer at high risk of returning after surgery and head and neck cancer. The drug will hit the PBS on Wednesday, but future plans are already in motion, seeing the subsidy expanded for the treatment of all cancers.

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MINISTER MCALLISTER

Urgent call to reverse nation's brain drain

The Australian, General News, 30/03/2026, Stephen Lunn, Page 1

Some of Australia's best minds, including three Nobel Prize winners, are urging the Albanese government to show leadership and repair research funding immediately or risk the nation's future. As other countries take leaps in technology and innovation, 63 senior members of the medical research and scientific community have written an open letter to Health Minister Mark Butler in a significant escalation of the push to rescue Australia's research effort and stop our greatest talent and ideas going overseas.

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

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Cross-party letter of rage

Daily Telegraph, General News, 30/03/2026, Julie Cross, Page 17

More than 100 federal politicians have formed an unprecedented alliance to fight Labor's "shambolic" aged care reforms, which have left seniors "much worse off". [...] So enraged by the changes-- and the dire impact they are having on their constituents-- the group of politicians from Liberal, National, One Nation and Greens parties, as well as independents, have sent a two-page letter to Aged Care and Seniors Minister Sam Rae, demanding urgent action.

Also reported by: [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#), [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#).

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Older Australians slugged \$120 for smoothies in aged care 'cash grab'

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 29/03/2026, Julie Cross

Older Australians are being slugged almost \$120 for a pack of seven fruit smoothies – which retails for less than \$20 – in the latest aged care cash grab. [...] Minister for Aged Care and Seniors Sam Rae said, anyone who believes their fees “are in any way excessive or impossible to justify” should report them to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

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

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DEPARTMENT

American praises Australia's 'free' life-saving endometriosis surgery after her \$5,760 bill

Yahoo! Lifestyle Australia, Other, 29/03/2026, Claudia Poposki

An American has been stunned to learn that Australians don't have to pay for a "life-changing" surgery that she paid thousands for. [...] "Australia has one of the best health care systems in the world," a spokesperson for the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing told Yahoo Lifestyle.

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How media and MPs twist the news to attack transgender people

OUTinPerth, Other, 29/03/2026, Graeme Watson

The national newspaper shone a spotlight on Dr Kerryn Drysdale, a senior research fellow at the University of New South Wales' Centre for Social Research in Health. [...] In 2024 the Rainbow Realities Report from La Trobe University, that was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care highlighted that there are significant gaps in engagement with health care among the LGBTIQ+ cohorts.

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

News of deeming increase is a major issue for all retirees

Canberra Times, Business News, 30/03/2026, Noel Whittaker, Page 13

Deeming is back in the news with a further increase to the deeming rates from March 20th, in parallel with the automatic indexation of the pension. Deeming is a major issue for retirees - it doesn't just affect income-tested pensioners, it also determines eligibility for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card and plays a major role in calculating aged care fees.

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Faceless, heartless call

Daily Telegraph, General News, 30/03/2026, Julie Cross, Page 17

Former lawyer Jayne Christian can see her mother's health deteriorating before her eyes, yet according to the government's controversial robo-algorithm, she's doing just fine. [...] She was shocked when her mum received a letter which stated, "The My Aged Care system algorithm has determined there has been no change."

Also reported by: [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#).

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'The elderly are getting beaten down': Aged care reforms leave vulnerable facing huge costs

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 29/03/2026, Julie Cross

Michael Stanley looks forward to his one and only shower of the week. It's now a luxury, as it is for many older Australians, following the government's aged care reforms, which saw a huge spike in the cost of services.

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

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Food is medicine and our aged-care providers must start treating it that way

Canberra Times, Other, 29/03/2026, Chris Deed

Aged care reform in Australia has focused heavily on staffing levels, regulation and funding. All of these matter. But there is another issue hiding in plain sight that affects the health, dignity and safety of

hundreds of thousands of older Australians every day: food.

Also reported by: [Illawarra Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Ballarat Courier \(Online\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#)

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Business fears 'serious interventions' needed to reduce demand as Labor warns of long-term 'fuel shock'

The Guardian, Other, 29/03/2026, Josh Butler

Australian business groups have warned governments to consider how to reduce petrol demand and step up support for struggling businesses as the fuel crisis takes hold. [...] Various sectors, including aged care, farming, housing and waste management, have already begun calling for government support to combat rising fuel prices.

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DISABILITY AND CARERS

Peter waited six months for a new wheelchair on the NDIS. By the time it arrived, it was obsolete

The Guardian, Other, 30/03/2026, Christopher Knaus

In September 2023, Peter* asked the National Disability Insurance Scheme for a new wheelchair. Peter was in pain.

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PRIMARY CARE

The National Health Reform Agreement is a step forward, but still not enough

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 30/03/2026, Danielle McMullin

Australia's public hospitals are the backbone of our health system — the places Australians turn to in moments of crisis, vulnerability, and profound need. Yet the findings of the Australian Medical Association's 2026 Public Hospital Report Card make one thing abundantly clear: our public hospitals remain under severe and sustained strain.

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POPULATION HEALTH

Government urged to fund crackdown on illegal cigarettes

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 30/03/2026, Shane Wright, Page 13

Jim Chalmers is facing internal pressure to use the May 12 budget to give more cash to the states and territories so they can ramp up their fight against the illegal tobacco trade, amid signs a near-decade long collapse in federal government cigarette excise is easing. This masthead can reveal Chalmers is being pressed to supply up to \$300 million in extra support, while the legal tobacco trade is calling for a cut in excise levels, in a move that it says would reduce the nation's inflation rate while undermining the organised crime-dominated illegal trade.

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

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Call to label domestic violence as a public health crisis

Gendered violence must be recognised as preventable, says a scholarship-winning student as she joins a next-generation chorus of doctors urging governments to respond to the crisis. Gender-based abuse is the leading cause of death and disability for Australian women between the ages of 18 and 44.

Also reported by: [Central Western Daily \(Orange\)](#).

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The injury affecting one in seven kids that parents don't know how to manage

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 29/03/2026, Frances Howe & Angus Thomson

One in three children have been prevented from playing a contact sport because of a parent's concerns about concussion, as uncertainty around the long-term effects of traumatic brain injuries risks depriving a generation of the benefits of physical activity. [...] Sport injuries account for more than half of all hospitalised concussions in children aged between 10 and 15 years, an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare analysis found.

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CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

'Hotspots' hold key to surge in MND

The Australian, Edition Changes - All-round Metro, 30/03/2026, Penny Timms, Page 6

Deaths from motor neurone disease have tripled in Australia in the past four decades, and scientists have now identified key regional "hotspots" where they say people are more likely to be struck down with the devastating neurological disorder. "This is the first comprehensive look at national mortality from this deadly disease, and it shows MND is now responsible for one death in every 234 across the country," says Carol Lee, of Macquarie University's MND Research Centre.

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Hotspot for MND as toll surges

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 30/03/2026, Brad Crouch, Page 11

South Australia has emerged as a hotspot for motor neurone disease (MND) as deaths nationally have tripled in the past 37 years, a landmark report shows. The study suggests unknown environmental risk factors are at play.

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Sick paying a heavy price

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 30/03/2026, Evangeline Polymeneas, Page 16

The rising cost of living is affecting people with chronic illness who are often having to pay out-of-pocket expenses to manage their diseases. On average, a person living with irritable bowel disease spends \$5900 annually, which amounts to 10 per cent of the average Australian household's disposable income.

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

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Cancer victims head overseas amid proton delays

Courier Mail, General News, 30/03/2026, Tayla Couacaud, Page 5

Queensland families are calling on the government to "do better" and provide urgent access to proton beam therapy as children sick with cancer are forced to go overseas for care. The families of a Gold Coast toddler who has a large tumour crushing nerves in her spine, and of a nine-month-old Brisbane boy Danny Bennett, diagnosed with an atypical teratoid rhabdoid tumour (AT/RT), are among those forking out thousands to head abroad.

Annaliese Holland will die within months. Here is what she wants you to know

ABC Online, Other, 29/03/2026, David Marchese

When Annaliese Holland was told she could die within the next year, she celebrated. [...] Annaliese — or Annie to her friends and family — has been approved for voluntary assisted dying in South Australia, and will end her life in months.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Mental health is too important to be healthcare's poor relation

Australian Financial Review, General News, 30/03/2026, Terry Barnes, Page 31

From one-off crises of confidence to anxiety and depression, mental unwellness affects everyone at one time or another.

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

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Referral system is losing patients

Daily Telegraph, General News, 30/03/2026, Madeleine Bower, Page 3

General practitioners and psychiatrists warn they are struggling to refer serious mental patients into the public health system, leaving thousands of vulnerable people struggling to find care. GPs, who are often the first option for patients with mental illness, say the overwhelmed public system has been increasingly refusing to take referrals for patients who have serious conditions but are not yet in critical life-threatening states.

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

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Left alone to their own dark world

Daily Telegraph, Editorials, 30/03/2026, Page 22

Without a doubt, previous eras of official mental health care were more cruel than they were compassionate. Those afflicted by mental health traumas were often kept in conditions that were, by any reasonable standards, primitive, brutal and frightening.

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Does medicinal cannabis work for depression, anxiety or PTSD? Our study says there's no evidence

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 30/03/2026, Jack Wilson & Emily Stockings

The number of Australians using medicinal cannabis has surged over the past five years. Around 700,000 Australians have used cannabis for their health in the past year.

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IMMUNISATION

No relevant coverage

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Private health rises to hit hard

Courier Mail, General News, 30/03/2026, Andrew Hedgman, Page 13

Australians are facing another hit to household budgets, with private health insurance premiums set to rise at the fastest pace in almost a decade. From April 1, premiums will increase by an industry average of 4.41 per cent, marking the largest uplift in around 10 years and adding fresh pressure at a time of persistent cost-of-living strains.

Also reported by: [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#).

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HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

National Endorsement of the InFORMed PICF Template

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 30/03/2026, Lisa Eckstein

A new nationally endorsed template aims to simplify and streamline Participant Information and Consent Forms for researchers and participants. For the Australian health sector to deliver the outcomes that Australians expect, we need a vibrant medical research sector.

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A new perspective on post-stroke cognitive impairment

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 30/03/2026, Margaret Moore

Researchers are uncovering important patterns in post-stroke cognitive impairment which suggest that factors outside stroke location contribute to the specific combination of deficits expressed in individuals. Having a stroke leaves many stroke survivors with cognitive impairments in core domains such as memory, attention, and language.

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Ninety years of funding Australian health research — and why the next decade matters more than ever

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 30/03/2026, Natasha Ness & Emily Phelps

As Australia marks 90 years of nationally coordinated, high quality health and medical research funding, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is celebrating nine significant decades of discovery through to impact. Here, NHMRC reflects on how research has changed over time, and why research needs to continue to evolve in order to face current and emerging challenges impacting all Australians.

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Full network of clitoral nerves mapped out for first time

The Guardian, Other, 29/03/2026, Chris Simms

Almost 30 years after the intricate web of nerves inside the penis was plotted out, the same mapping has finally been completed for one of the least-studied organs in the human body – the clitoris. As well as revealing the extent of the nerves that are crucial to orgasms, the work shows that some of what medics are learning about the anatomy of the clitoris is wrong, and could help prevent women who have pelvic operations from ending up with poorer sexual function.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

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PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

Change after Pippa's hospital death

Central Western Daily, General News, 30/03/2026, Riley Krause, Page 1

Annah White feels like the death of her two-year-old daughter was "not for nothing" following a major change to the state's health system. Pippa White died at Orange Hospital on June 13, 2022.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

Hospital deaths letter sparks fresh row

Launceston Examiner, General News, 30/03/2026, Saree Salter, Page 3

The state's nursing union has delivered a letter to the health minister detailing information about two recent deaths at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH). The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) alleged the deaths might have been avoidable if it was not for long wait times and a lack of monitoring.

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

NSW healthcare workers subjected to violent attacks

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 29/03/2026, Suzan Giuliani

Healthcare workers and security guards in NSW are being punched, bitten and subjected to other violent attacks, with many now too afraid to go to work as new police data reveals a surge in assaults. The Sunday Telegraph can reveal that assaults on hospital premises, which include attacks on healthcare workers, have surged by 373 more incidents in the past year compared to a decade ago.

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

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

Two in five Australian GPs use AI scribes to record patient notes – but do they trade care for convenience?

The Guardian, Other, 29/03/2026, Josh Taylor

When a patient walks into a GP's office in Australia today, the doctor may begin with a question: "Do you give consent to use an AI scribe to record our conversation?"

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

Riverina GP banned from delivering babies

Daily Advertiser, General News, 30/03/2026, Taylor Dodge, Page 3

A Tumut GP has been banned from undertaking obstetric practices and will be under supervision due to concerns of patient safety. [...] According to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and National Board, Dr Darwiche has been a registered general practitioner since 2008.

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Painter died waiting for transport

Central Western Daily, General News, 30/03/2026, Allison Hore, Page 5

A patient who died at a Western NSW hospital likely would have survived if she was transported to a larger hospital sooner, according to a report from the coroner. Eve Liza Brown, an Indigenous artist from Lightning Ridge, was suspected to have a urinary tract infection when she went to the local multi-purpose clinic on Thursday, July 1, 2021.

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Chiropractor avoids criminal record while clinic stays shut

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 30/03/2026, Jessica Howard, Page 7

A hamilton chiropractor will avoid a criminal record, but his practice remains shut, following allegations he sexually violated a 13-year-old girl during a one-on-one appointment. Stephen Hehir, 80, faced Hamilton Magistrates' Court on Wednesday charged with assaulting the girl at his practice in June 2024.

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