



# TODAY'S NEWS

Monday, 20th April 2026

[Minister Butler](#) | [Minister McAllister](#) | [Minister Rae](#) | [Assistant Minister McBride](#) |  
[Assistant Minister White](#) | [Special Envoy Repacholi](#) | [Department](#)  
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## LINKS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **The Australian** (page 1) reports that the Victorian government is offsetting the costs of pre-existing disability accommodation, much of it in "disgraceful" condition, against mandatory contributions to the NDIS. Minister for Health and the NDIS Mark Butler is expected to unveil reforms to rein in the scheme's annual growth in his National Press Club address on Wednesday. *Also reported by: [The Australian](#), [Australian Financial Review](#), [ABC Online](#)*
- The **Herald Sun** (page 1) reports that Carlton Football Club has conceded it knew Elijah Hollands was struggling with his mental health when the young player was controversially fielded against Collingwood on Thursday night. *Also reported by: [Sydney Morning Herald](#), [West Australian](#), [Adelaide Advertiser](#), [The Age](#), [Guardian Australia](#)*
- The **Sydney Morning Herald** (page 3) reports that Lifeblood donors will be asked gender-neutral questions about sexual activity, ending discrimination against gay and bisexual men and their partners, in reforms approved by the TGA last year that take effect from today. *Also reported by: [The Age](#)*
- The **Hobart Mercury** (page 3) reports that a state-funded pilot program in Tasmania will help young people more easily connect with mental health services.
- The **Canberra Times** (page 3) reports that RSV vaccine Arexvy will be free for every Australian aged 75 and over and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 60 and over from May

15 under the National Immunisation Program. Minister for Health Mark Butler said aged care residents and older First Nations Australians are particularly vulnerable to the virus. *Also reported by: [Hobart Mercury](#), [Pharmacy Daily](#).*

- The [West Australian](#) (page 3) reports that pharmacists in WA are running out of FluMist nasal vaccines in the first week of a State Government program to provide them free to children.
- [The Australian](#) (page 4) reports that a mental wellbeing survey of politicians at federal, state and local levels found one in four had considered self-harm due to the pressures of their job.
- The [Courier Mail](#) (page 4) reports that the Queensland Government is hoping for funds in the May federal budget to address the growing number of hospital beds taken by elderly patients waiting for aged care places.
- [The Australian](#) (page 6) reports that the Australian Council on Smoking and Health has ranked Queensland the best and the Northern Territory worst in a comparison of state and territory controls on illicit tobacco enforcement. *Also reported by: [Herald Sun](#), [Courier Mail](#), [WA Today](#), [NEWS.com.au](#)*
- [The Australian](#) (page 7) reports that the Australian Association of Medical Research Institutes says ten of 14 medical research bodies in Victoria will fold by 2030 without substantial funding increases in the upcoming state budget.
- The [Herald Sun](#) (page 18) reports that experts say makers of popular protein bars are "gaming" the Health Star Ratings system to make them appear healthy. The Department of Health said the Health Star system is only intended to aid in like-for-like comparisons and not to class foods as "healthy" or "unhealthy". *Also reported by: [Adelaide Advertiser](#), [Courier Mail](#), [Daily Telegraph](#)*

## MINISTER BUTLER

### 'Disgrace': NDIS homes in ALP sights

The Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, Sarah Ison and Angelica Snowden, Page 1

State governments are counting run-down disability housing as part of their mandatory contributions to the embattled NDIS, in what experts say is one of many problems facing the troubled sector that's wasting taxpayer funds across the disability and hospital systems. The growing issue is expected to be addressed in the coming budget, which NDIS and Health Minister Mark Butler has made clear will include new reforms to achieve the government's 5 per cent annual growth target for a scheme currently running at about \$50bn-a-year.

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

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### Chalmers sounds red alert

The Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, Greg Brown and Geoff Chambers, Page 1

Jim Chalmers has vowed to slash red tape in the May budget as an alliance of major business groups warns employers and consumers are being hit by the double whammy of high regulatory costs and the impacts of the Iran war. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler will this week outline how the government plans to reduce the growth to the NDIS to 5-6 per cent, while tax breaks for electric vehicles are also likely to be tweaked in the budget.

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

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### War won't kill reform goal: Labor

Australian Financial Review, General News, 20/04/2026, Ronald Mizen, Page 1

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has vowed to forge ahead with an ambitious reform agenda and to address the nation's critical supply chain vulnerabilities, but he admits the May budget is hostage to global economic turmoil.

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## Reform of NDIS a national obligation

The Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, Linda Reynolds, Page 11

Australia's world-first plan to revolutionise how as a nation we treat and support our most profoundly disabled citizens started with great promise and multi-partisan enthusiasm across our federation. [...] This campaign, supported by the Greens and many disability advocates, forced me to scrap the much-needed independent assessments which would have made the scheme far more equitable and sustainable – ironically something minister Mark Butler is reportedly now considering.

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## NDIS unregistered provider crackdown coming, as Butler searches for more than \$6b in savings

ABC Online, Other, 19/04/2026, Jake Evans

NDIS Minister Mark Butler's plan to save more than \$6 billion a year in National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) spending by 2036 is expected to include a crackdown on unregistered providers, in an effort to preserve the \$50 billion scheme's "social licence". [...] Under a potential model developed by the Health Department, nearly all supports would be registered through a four-tiered system, with light-touch registration that could actually reduce burdens for some already-registered providers offering services dubbed low risk, a medium risk registration scheme, and an advanced scheme for high-risk support requiring "in-depth" assessments.

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## ABC, ABC News (Sunday), 19/04/2026, Jeremy Fernandez

The Federal Government is preparing reforms to crack down on unregistered providers in the NDIS. Health Minister Mark Butler is expected to outline plans later this week to curb rising costs, with most providers currently operating unregistered and under limited oversight. Butler has previously warned about fraudsters exploiting the \$50 billion scheme.

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## ABC, Insiders, 19/04/2026, David Speers

Panel discussion with AFR columnist Jennifer Hewett, Lamestream's Osman Faruqi and news.com.au political editor Samantha Maiden on proposed changes to the NDIS. Hewett notes that while Health Minister Mark Butler is set to outline reforms aimed at bringing the scheme under control, anything short of a fundamental eligibility redesign risks being seen as 'smoke and mirrors', with major backlash if access is tightened. She raises concerns that expanding eligibility has made the scheme feel like a 'bottomless pit'.

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## '\$40,000, brand new, never used': NDIS flippers flood Facebook Marketplace as crackdown looms

Adelaide Now, Other, 19/04/2026, Frank Chung

[...] "Mandatory registration for Supported Independent Living and platform providers means we are setting a higher bar for providers of these critical, high-risk disability support services," NDIS Minister Jenny McAllister said in December. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler last August announced those children would be moved off the NDIS onto a new program dubbed Thriving Kids, as the government aims to bring down annual growth in spending from 10 per cent to at least 8 per cent.

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [news.com.au \(Online\)](#).

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## Seniors to get free access to jab in fight against respiratory syncytial virus

Canberra Times, General News, 20/04/2026, John Kidman, Page 3

RSV jabs are being made free for older Australians. The respiratory syncytial virus vaccinations will be available without charge to people 75 and older to ensure protection from the potentially deadly pathogen. [...] "Aged care residents and older First Nations people are particularly vulnerable to this common respiratory illness," Health Minister Mark Butler said.

Also reported by: [Newcastle Herald \(Newcastle\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Wollongong\)](#), [Burnie Advocate \(Burnie\)](#),  
Similar coverage: [West Australian \(Online\)](#).

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## ABC News, ABC News - 15:00 (Weekend), 19/04/2026

The Federal Government has expanded its free RSV vaccination program ahead of winter, making the vaccine available from May 15 to Australians aged 75 and over and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 60 and over. Health Minister Mark Butler says the move removes cost barriers, with the Arexvy vaccine previously costing around \$300 on the private market and now being listed on the National Immunisation Program for eligible groups.

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## SBS, World News Australia (Sunday), 19/04/2026, Janice Petersen

The Federal Government will make free RSV vaccinations available for older Australians from May 15 under a \$445 million expansion of the National Immunisation Program. Health Minister Mark Butler says the move will help ensure Australians can access the world's best medicines and vaccines at affordable prices, with the Arexvy vaccine normally costing about \$300 a dose. The vaccine will be available through GPs, pharmacies and local health services.

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## Channel 10, 10 News (Weekend), 19/04/2026, Georgie Tunny

A \$450 million RSV vaccine program will be rolled out from May 15 to protect older Australians as winter approaches and immunisation rates decline. Health Minister Mark Butler says the vaccine will be free under the National Immunisation Program for Australians over 75 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 60, targeting a virus that can cause pneumonia or death alongside flu and COVID-19.

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## The simple medication switch that could save Australians over \$165 million

SBS, Other, 19/04/2026, Cameron Carr

New research suggests Australians are missing out on cheaper medicines and spending millions more on smaller quantity prescriptions. [...] "The government has projected that if around half of blood pressure medication was prescribed at a larger 60-day dose, Australians would save \$165 million each year," she told SBS News, citing figures repeated by health minister Mark Butler.

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## MINISTER MCALLISTER

### '\$40,000, brand new, never used': NDIS flippers flood Facebook Marketplace as crackdown looms

Adelaide Now, Other, 19/04/2026, Frank Chung

[...] "Mandatory registration for Supported Independent Living and platform providers means we are setting a higher bar for providers of these critical, high-risk disability support services," NDIS Minister Jenny McAllister said in December. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler last August announced those children would be moved off the NDIS onto a new program dubbed Thriving Kids, as the government aims to bring down annual growth in spending from 10 per cent to at least 8 per cent.

Also reported by: [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [news.com.au \(Online\)](#).

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### Hiding a broken system

People with autism on the National Disability Insurance Scheme – which is under intense scrutiny ahead of the May budget – say they are being made scapegoats for a poorly designed, poorly run system. [...] A spokesman for NDIS Minister Jenny McAllister said the government was determined to make sure it's a program that's secure for the future.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#)

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## Is the Thriving Kids program fit for purpose?

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 20/04/2026, Becca Whitehead

While many stakeholders are 'cautiously optimistic' that the Thriving Kids program will support kids with developmental delays and autism, some are concerned the program hasn't had enough time in planning. InSight+ spoke with Autism Awareness Australia (AAA) CEO Nicole Rogerson after her recent conversation with NDIS Senator Jenny McKallister.

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## MINISTER RAE

### Doing the maths on the Support at Home program

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 20/04/2026, Darren Birbeck, Page 28

The new Aged Care Act came into operation on November 1 last year, and with it, the introduction of the new Support at Home program, replacing home care packages. [...] In March, a coalition of MPs wrote to the Aged Care Minister, Sam Rae, seeking urgent changes to the Support at Home program to resolve issues with the single assessment, categorisation of some personal care services into the Clinical Care category and a review of the 10 per cent cap on case management.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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## SPECIAL ENVOY REPACHOLI

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## DEPARTMENT

### Four-star bars & grain of salt

Herald Sun, General News, 20/04/2026, Taylor Penny, Page 18

Most popular protein bars sold in supermarkets with Health Star Ratings are scored four or higher, but experts have raised the alarm that Australia's nutrition labelling system is being "gamed". [...] A Department of Health spokesman said the taxpayer-funded Health Star rating system did not actually class foods as "healthy" or "unhealthy".

Also reported by: [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#)

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## NDIS unregistered provider crackdown coming, as Butler searches for more than \$6b in savings

ABC Online, Other, 19/04/2026, Jake Evans

NDIS Minister Mark Butler's plan to save more than \$6 billion a year in National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) spending by 2036 is expected to include a crackdown on unregistered providers, in an effort to preserve the \$50 billion scheme's "social licence". [...] Under a potential model developed by the Health Department, nearly all supports would be registered through a four-tiered system, with light-touch registration that could actually reduce burdens for some already-registered providers offering services dubbed low risk, a medium risk registration scheme, and an advanced scheme for high-risk support requiring "in-depth" assessments.

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## Australia's first population biobank a win for health research

Medical Journal of Australia, Other, 20/04/2026, Craig Cormick, Andrew Crowden, Lisa Devereux, Juanita Fernando, Penelope Lello, Caroline Bull, Sarah Payton and Beverly Muhlhausler

The Australian Health Biobank is Australia's first national general population biobank. [...] To address this gap in critical national research infrastructure, the CSIRO, supported by the Australian Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is establishing Australia's first national biobank to provide researchers with secure access to a nationally representative repository of high-quality biospecimens and data.

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## Sky News Live, The Macpherson Angle, 19/04/2026, James Macpherson

Panel discussion with Waverley Liberal councillor Michelle Stephenson and Sky News contributor Joe Hildebrand on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing spending \$52 million translating documents for non-English speakers. Stephenson says it is reasonable to expect migrants to have working English skills. Hildebrand supports the need for translation in critical services like hospitals and emergency calls but rejects claims that such policies are racist.

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## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### Wait for aged care hangs on budget

Courier Mail, General News, 20/04/2026, Taylah Fellows, Page 4

The number of Queenslanders languishing in hospital beds waiting for aged care is worsening, with the state government banking on a funding uptick in the upcoming federal budget to fix the crisis. Elderly patients unable to secure aged-care placements are now costing the state \$3m per day, or \$2372 per patient.

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## DISABILITY AND CARERS

### Teals want responsible NDIS reform

Australian Financial Review, Letters, 20/04/2026, Dr Monique Ryan MP, Page 31

For more than a decade, the NDIS has enabled people with disability to live more independent lives and to participate more fully in their communities.

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## Autism funding slashed

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 20/04/2026, Julie Cross, Page 16

Finley Healey's parents believe their little boy's NDIS funding was cut because he has autism as his primary diagnosis. One in 10 children aged five to seven are on the \$50bn a year scheme, with the majority diagnosed with "mild or moderate" autism.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#)

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## Trying to rein in NDIS costs

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 20/04/2026, Julie Cross, Page 16

The \$50 billion-a-year National Disability Insurance Scheme is gearing up to be the centrepiece of cost savings in the budget, leaving participants and their families on tenterhooks over where the guillotine will fall.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#)

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## PRIMARY CARE

### 2GB, Weekends, 19/04/2026, Luke Grant

Interview with Cleanbill CEO James Gillespie about new data on bulk-billing availability across Australia. Gillespie discusses findings showing a nationwide rise in fully bulk-billing GP clinics following recent Medicare changes, with the biggest increases in regional and remote areas. He says that while fully bulk-billing clinics have nearly doubled from about 20% to just over 40%, most clinics still charge out-of-pocket fees, which have risen by around 13.5%.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

### States fail the grade on illicit tobacco trade

The Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, Mohammad Alfares, Page 6

Queensland has emerged as the nation's top performer in cracking down on illicit tobacco, while the Northern Territory is the worst, in a new "league table" exposing major gaps in enforcement across Australia. The analysis by the Australian Council on Smoking and Health ranks states and territories on supply chain controls, penalties and enforcement, finding a huge divide between leaders and laggards.

Also reported by: [The Australian \(Online\)](#), Similar coverage: [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [WA Today \(Online\)](#)

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### Chop, chop, Victoria – you're losing the fight

Herald Sun, General News, 20/04/2026, Regan Hodge, Page 17

Victoria's lacklustre response to the illicit tobacco war has been ranked the worst of any mainland state in Australia.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#)

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## Weeding out risky sellers

Courier Mail, General News, 20/04/2026, Andreas Nicola, Page 15

There are too many places selling tobacco products in Queensland, with a health peak body calling for greater checks on retailers to weed out those who stock illicit products. New data from the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH) shows Queensland is leading the country with proactive swift responses to the illicit trade, backed by the strongest enforcement and the most boots on ground.

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

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## Call to kick out booze ads

The Australian, Business News, 20/04/2026, Danielle Long, Page 13

Four out of five Australians want alcohol ads restricted during sport broadcasts on TV, according to a new report, prompting calls for the federal government and media regulator to extend the recent crackdown on gambling advertising by introducing harsher rules surrounding the promotion of alcohol. [...] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data shows alcohol consumption is at its lowest level in a decade a trend that sits uncomfortably with the claim that current safeguards are failing the community."

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

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## A high health bar to clear

Daily Telegraph, General News, 20/04/2026, Taylor Penny, Page 7

Protein bar companies are "gaming" Australia's health star ratings system, experts claim, with eighty per cent of popular bars sold in supermarkets unfairly scoring four or higher. Health experts have raised alarm that Australia's controversial nutrition labelling system which has a highest possible rating of five stars is being "gamed" by protein bar companies to make the convenient snack appear healthier than it really is.

Also reported by: [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#).

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## Forced care rates blow out

Gold Coast Bulletin, General News, 20/04/2026, Ann Wason Moore, Page 3

Queensland's public advocate has called for an urgent review of the Mental Health Act as involuntary treatment orders surge across the state, almost three times the national average. [...] Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showed involuntary treatment was used in 74 per cent of nonacute hospitalisations in Queensland in 2023-24, compared to 27 per cent nationally.

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## Young people taking initiative to quit at Canberra's first dedicated vaping support program

ABC Online, Other, 19/04/2026, Caitlin Maloney

Cameron Owens-Gale first picked up vaping almost 10 years ago in California, before they became popular in Australia. He'd kept up the habit irregularly over the decade, until a cough and sharp chest pains started to persist, and the now-28-year-old knew it was time to quit for good.

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## How Australia's other half heals: all aboard the superyacht where rehab costs \$600,000 a week

The Guardian, Other, 19/04/2026, Cait Kelly

The view of the Whitsundays is postcard-perfect. The setting – a private yacht – extravagant. [...] Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows there were 46,000 hospitalisations due to alcohol and other drugs in 2023-24.

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## CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

No relevant coverage

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## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

### Carlton's blues grow

Herald Sun, General News, 20/04/2026, Ed Bourke and Jon Ralph, Page 1

Carlton has admitted it was aware Elijah Hollands was struggling and "having some problems" when he was brought on to the field multiple times during Thursday night's loss to Collingwood at the MCG. It comes as the club and AFL again refused to say whether Hollands was tested for drugs or alcohol post-match.

Also reported by: [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [The Australian \(Australia\)](#), [Daily Telegraph \(Sydney\)](#), [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Darwin\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#).

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### Carlton player's bizarre onfield behaviour remains unexplained

Sydney Morning Herald, Sport, 20/04/2026, Hannah Kennelly and Peter Ryan, Page 37

Carlton CEO Graham Wright says the Blues were aware Elijah Hollands "was struggling during the game" and has reiterated that the club does not suspect drugs or alcohol were involved in the player's unusual behaviour during the loss to Collingwood on Thursday night. Coach Michael Voss checked on Hollands on Friday and the club's football manager and medical staff have been in regular contact with the 23-year-old and his family.

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

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### Carlton 'aware' of Hollands struggle

West Australian, Sport, 20/04/2026, Oliver Caffrey, Page 54

Carlton have ruled Elijah Hollands out of the Blues' next game after his "unprecedented" mental health episode against Collingwood. The Blues continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding Hollands' concerning and erratic performance at the MCG on Thursday night.

Also reported by: [Canberra Times \(Canberra\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Newcastle\)](#), [Illawarra Mercury \(Wollongong\)](#), [Daily Liberal \(Dubbo\)](#), [Western Advocate \(Bathurst\)](#), [Central Western Daily \(Orange\)](#), [Daily Advertiser \(Wagga Wagga\)](#), [Border Mail \(Albury-Wodonga\)](#), [Ballarat Courier \(Ballarat\)](#), [Bendigo Advertiser \(Bendigo\)](#), [Warrnambool Standard \(Warrnambool\)](#), [Launceston Examiner \(Launceston\)](#), [Burnie Advocate \(Burnie\)](#).

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### Blues' failure a wider wake-up call in sport

Adelaide Advertiser, Editorials, 20/04/2026, Page 18

The professional sporting world – and other workplaces – need to watch what has happened with the situation of the Carlton club running player Elijah Hollands against Collingwood at the MCG while aware he was suffering a suspected mental health episode. There is a lot more to play out about this incident, with a lot of questions as yet unanswered.

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### Elijah Hollands fell through the cracks in plain sight. Many questions remain

Age, Sport, 20/04/2026, Michael Gleeson, Page 39

When a player is hit on the head on the football field, an established protocol is quickly invoked and treatment escalates to the point where a suffering player is quickly removed from the game. There

appears not to be any such protocol for dealing with a player who has a known history of mental health issues and is suffering a possible mental health episode.

Also reported by: [Sydney Morning Herald \(Online\)](#), [The Age \(Online\)](#), [Brisbane Times \(Online\)](#), [WA Today \(Online\)](#). Similar coverage: [Guardian Australia \(Online\)](#).

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## MPs' mental health crisis 'is bad for our democracy and bad for the people'

The Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, Mackenzie Scott, Page 4

One in five Australian MPs has considered self-harm or ending their life because of the pressure they've felt from work, according to a study of Australian politicians. A survey of almost 300 federal, state and local political leaders found the pressure of public life, including conflict with colleagues and social media abuse, had impacted the mental wellbeing of 70 per cent of MPs, with almost two in five reporting they had felt unable to speak out about how they were feeling.

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

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## 'It's not weak to speak out': Teen's urgent mental health plea

Hobart Mercury, General News, 20/04/2026, Alison Foletta, Page 3

Devonport teenager Stanton Burt was only 12 years old when he first struggled to find mental health support in a system he said was too complicated to navigate. Now 14, Stanton said he had no idea where to get help when he first started experiencing issues.

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## DV fuels crisis of women's suicides

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 20/04/2026, Shayla Bulloch, Page 3

Up to half of all women who take their own lives have been impacted by domestic violence, shocking new research reveals. Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) also found that children who grow up around violence are more likely to self-harm, while domestic violence offenders are using threats of suicide as a tactic of coercive control.

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## Channel 10, 10 News (Weekend), 19/04/2026

Anxiety disorders among children and teenagers are rising, with the average age of diagnosis now 11 and half of mental health issues emerging before age 14. The Anxiety Project, a school-based teacher training program focused on challenging avoidance behaviours, is now being used in almost 150 primary schools, mainly in New South Wales. Project founder Michael Hawton hopes it can be rolled out nationally, and eventually to New Zealand, to support more students, parents and teachers.

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## IMMUNISATION

### Illness 'worse than Covid'

Hobart Mercury, General News, 20/04/2026, Alison Foletta, Page 4

More than 50,000 Tasmanians will have federally funded access to the first vaccine for a respiratory disease that can feel "worse than flu or Covid". The first respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine, called AREXVY, will soon be available on the National Immunisation Program, and available for free for Australians aged 75 and over, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 60 and over from May 15.

Similar coverage: [Pharmacy Daily \(Online\)](#).

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## Free access to job for senior citizens

Daily Advertiser, General News, 20/04/2026, John Kidman, Page 7

RSV jabs are being made free for older Australians. The respiratory syncytial virus vaccinations will be available without charge to people 75 and older to ensure protection from the potentially deadly pathogen.

Also reported by: [Northern Daily Leader \(Tamworth\)](#).

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## ABC News, Weekend Breakfast, 19/04/2026, Fauziah Ibrahim and Johanna Nicholson

Interview with ANU's Dr Sanjaya Senanayake about respiratory virus protection and the upcoming flu season. Senanayake discusses the rollout of free RSV vaccinations for older Australians and outlines expectations for flu season variability and the importance of early vaccination. He highlights an effective flu nasal spray for children that can reduce hospitalisations and recommends getting vaccinated early for peak protection.

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## Mist chance on flu vaccine

West Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, Claire Sadler, Page 3

Pharmacists have warned of minimal stock of the needle-free flu vaccine in the first week of the free rollout for kids due to an order limit. It comes just days after the Health Minister boasted the rollout would make flu vaccinations more accessible for children across the State.

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

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## Can Australia reclaim vaccine crown?

Canberra Times, Editorials, 20/04/2026, Page 18

As the nation prepares to pause and reflect on April 25 for Anzac Day, another significant global observance is quietly slipping under the radar. April 24 marks the beginning of World Immunisation Week.

Also reported by: [Newcastle Herald \(Newcastle\)](#).

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

### State medical research faces budget crunch

The Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, Rachel Baxendale, Page 7

Ten of Victoria's 14 medical research institutes will be forced to close by 2030 without an urgent boost to bring their annual funding to \$95m in next month's state budget, according to their representative body. As the Allan government scrambles to find savings amid record state debt headed for \$194bn by 2029, Australian Association of Medical Research Institutes Victoria chair Keith Martin said a failure to adequately fund medical research not only imperilled lifesaving work, but would result in economic losses for the state.

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

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

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## PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

### **Royal Darwin Hospital staff use ChatGPT to calculate medication doses, nurses claim**

ABC Online, Other, 19/04/2026, Tilda Colling

Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) staff have voiced concerns about patient loads, hygiene conditions and a lack of staff training, which they say affects patient care. Nurses have labelled the working conditions as "scary", telling the ABC staff are using YouTube and ChatGPT to teach themselves procedures.

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## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### **Sex health nurses set to strike**

Courier Mail, General News, 20/04/2026, Taylah Fellows, Page 13

Nurses caring for sexual assault and abuse victims have launched unprecedented strike action against their employer, True Relationships. The Protected Industrial Action will see a group of about 20 nurses who work at Queensland sexual and reproductive health services begin bulk billing all patients from Monday, as they fight for a better wage deal with True Relationships – formerly known as Family Planning Queensland.

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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

## GP banned for fat surgery

West Australian, General News, 20/04/2026, John Flint, Page 10

A Byford GP has had his registration suspended for three months for submitting forms that enabled a female patient to pay for cosmetic surgery by accessing her superannuation early. Under the law, compassionate release of super is only permitted to pay for treatment of a life-threatening illness or injury, to alleviate acute or chronic pain or acute or chronic mental illness.

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## AUSTRALIAN CDC

### Kimberley diphtheria rates more than triple in a month after 50-year eradication

ABC Online, Other, 19/04/2026, Ruby Littler

Cases of the potentially fatal bacterial infection diphtheria have more than tripled in the past month in Western Australia's far north. The WA Country Health Service said there were 27 notified cases of diphtheria in the Kimberley, and growing — compared to seven notified cases a month ago. [...] Even with antibiotic treatment, up to one in 10 people with respiratory symptoms die, with a higher mortality rate among children, according to the Australian Centre for Disease Control.

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## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### Why Nick can now keep blood pact with his mum

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 20/04/2026, Angus Thomson, Page 3

Exclusive Every Australian wanting to give blood will be asked gender-neutral questions about their recent sexual activity in an overhaul of rules effectively banning many gay and bisexual men from becoming donors. The changes come into effect today and are designed to boost the nation's donor pool while addressing a major source of stigma for LGBTQ people. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration approved Lifeblood's application to change the rule last year, after extensive risk modelling and screening research showed the overhaul would not affect the safety of Australia's precious blood supply.

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

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### Searches up 900 per cent: Google faces influx of illegal peptide ads

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 20/04/2026, Kishor Napier-Raman, Page 10

Tech giant Google has been hosting dozens of advertisements for synthetic peptides that the tech giant says are in breach of its own policies and Australian laws designed to protect the country from companies pushing unlicensed or prescription-only drugs. [...] Most are either not cleared for human use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, or can't be sold without a doctor's prescription.

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

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### Warning over Ozempic rival

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 20/04/2026, Page 6

The Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued a warning over a new experimental drug which has been compared to the weight loss drugs Ozempic and Wegovy. The drug ratatrutide is known to target three hormone pathways instead of one or two with individuals losing over 20 per cent of their body weight in less than a year in control trails, tricking the body into feeling full while revving up metabolism.

Also reported by: [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#), [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#), [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Toowoomba\)](#).  
Similar coverage: [Medical Journal of Australia \(Online\)](#).

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## OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

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