



# TODAY'S NEWS

Tuesday, 19th May 2026

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## LINKS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Australian](#)** (page 4) reports the NDIS and Health Minister Mark Butler have outlined a vision to introduce greater automation and plan-by-plan budget setting to improve consistency, achieve 185 billion dollars in projected savings, and reduce annual growth to 5 per cent by 2030.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 1) reports the NDIS and the Disability Support Pension are insufficient to fully cover the lifelong financial needs of individuals with severe intellectual disabilities, according to a legal expert who established both a special disability trust and a discretionary testamentary trust for his vulnerable son.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 4) reports Aged Care Minister Sam Rae announced the Federal Government will empower the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to order refunds from aged-care providers found to be overcharging clients for services funded by home-care packages following reports of retail products costing up to seven times more than the open market.
- **[The Adelaide Advertiser](#)** (page 11) leads reports that Australian health officials will be working with international counterparts to respond to the World Health Organisation's declaration of a global public health emergency in the wake of a deadly ebola outbreak in the Congo following reports of more than 80 linked deaths.

- **[The Herald Sun](#)** (page 1) reports a special investigation and laboratory testing revealed that approximately 30 per cent of Victorian bottle shops and various hospitality venues are selling bootleg vodka containing more than 10 times the legal limit of methanol.
- **[The Canberra Times](#)** (page 2) reports a Senate inquiry has been told that high tax increases on legal products have caused a surge in black market demand for cigarettes that could make the Australian tobacco market fully illicit within two years.
- **[The Medical Republic](#)** (online) reports the The Department of Veterans' Affairs has released a new set of integrity principles and expectations establishing seven official standards for health practitioners and organisations delivering care to veterans to combat predatory business models and inappropriate prescribing, including requiring specialist scripts and face-to-face initial consultations for medicinal cannabis access via the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.
- **[The Australian](#)** (page 3) reports the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission has suspended the president-elect of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Dr Sharmila Chandran, from all leadership positions until 20 September 2026 following advice from SafeWork NSW that Dr Chandran failed to comply with a workplace health and safety prohibition notice.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### Automation of NDIS just the start: minister

The Australian, General News, 19/05/2026, Sarah Ison, Page 4

Health and NDIS Minister Mark Butler has defended his move to bring more automated decision making into the National Disability Insurance Scheme, declaring automation will become an increasingly big part of how social programs across the country are administered in the future. Laying out his vision for greater "budget setting" in the 760,000 custom and highly variable NDIS plans as a way to achieve the government's \$185bn in projected savings, Mr Butler said he was both proud and overwhelmed to be taking on the biggest reforms to the scheme in its history.

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

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### An appetite for growth: pharmacy's big bet on GLP-1s

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, General News, 01/05/2026, Page 16

Weight loss medicines have exploded in popularity in the past couple of years, leading to top line growth for pharmacies and higher demand for clinical advice to manage side effects, plateaus and dosage changes. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said he received this advice just before Christmas.

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### New medicines may be out of reach of PBS patients as Australia fails to adapt to 'seismic market shifts'

The Australian, Other, 18/05/2026, Natasha Robinson

Evidence is emerging that Australia is being reconsidered as a destination for the launch of a host of new drugs by pharmaceutical companies as US President Donald Trump's medicines policies prompt "seismic shifts" in global pricing incentives that represent a critical threat to local patients. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler has reassured Australians that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is "not going to change" amid concerns over US President Donald Trump's 100 per cent tariff on pharmaceuticals.

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### 'Chalmernomics' budget sliced up but didn't grow the pie

Australian Financial Review, Other, 18/05/2026, Stephen Anthony

Assessing Treasurer Jim Chalmers' fifth budget reminds us why we teach our children not to lie. The greatest gift we can ever give the next generation is not real estate, but our personal example: trustworthiness, integrity and patriotism.

## Our kids our call: Parents tell Labor to quit lecturing them and subsidise care in the home

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 18/05/2026, Josh Hanrahan & Will Paige

Parents and experts have slammed a senior Albanese government minister's claim that kids should be rushed into childcare to be "better" prepared for school, warning that Labor's narrow-minded focus is not allowing families to do what is best for them and their children. [...] The comments of Ms Gallagher followed Health Minister Mark Butler last year drawing criticism for suggesting kids who are being cared for by their grandparents were not receiving the same level of education as those in formal childcare.

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

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## 'Huge failure': Lack of action on disability inquiry's findings prompts fears of violence

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 18/05/2026, Courtney Kruk

People with disability will face increased rates of violence and abuse, advocates warn, after new analysis revealed just 3 per cent of the more than 200 recommendations from the disability royal commission have been implemented. [...] QIDAN's analysis comes at a time of national scrutiny of the disability sector, with federal Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Mark Butler announcing significant cuts to support frameworks and funding this year.

Also reported by: [Brisbane Times \(Online\)](#), [The Age \(Online\)](#), [WA Today \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

## Cameron Milner: Federal Budget has destroyed Jim Chalmers' chance to ever be prime minister

West Australian, Other, 18/05/2026, Cameron Milner

Jim Chalmers may have just destroyed his chance to ever be prime minister. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler has clean hands with his NDIS changes as do Housing Minister Clare O'Neil and rising star Andrew Charlton, who collectively make up Labor's next generation.

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## Australians in quarantine test negative for hantavirus after returning from MV Hondius

Thenightly.com.au, Other, 18/05/2026, Alexandra Feiam

The six passengers on-board the cruise ship exposed to the deadly hantavirus have had their test results returned as they remain in a quarantine facility in Western Australia. Australian cruise passengers start their quarantine in WA. Health Minister Mark Butler said the quarantine arrangements were the strongest in the world.

[Read More](#)

## The government plans to tighten NDIS eligibility. Here's what's likely to change

The Conversation, Other, 18/05/2026, Georgia van Toorn & Helen Dickinson

Amid the noise and spectacle of budget week, one significant policy change has slipped largely under the radar. Health Minister Mark Butler introduced changes that, if passed by parliament, will tighten access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

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

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## Australia's pandemic preparedness tested

Aged Care Insite, Other, 18/05/2026

When news broke of an outbreak of the deadly hantavirus on board a cruise ship, the world held its collective breath. [...] "They're going to be put into the strongest quarantine arrangements you'll find anywhere in the world," Health Minister Mark Butler said on Friday.

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## **NDIS changes spark uncertainty as advocates warn over impacts**

Redland Bayside News, Other, 18/05/2026

Proposed changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) have prompted concern among advocates, with key details still unclear about how reforms will affect hundreds of thousands of Australians. [...] The reforms, outlined by Federal Minister for Health and Ageing Mark Butler at the National Press Club in April, aim to slow the long-term growth of the NDIS to around 5-6 per cent annually.

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## **Government squibs it on gambling ads**

The Echo, Other, 18/05/2026, David Lowe

In the kind of move that Labor once derided in their opponents, the government used the cover of the federal budget – while most journalists were literally locked up – to deliver its response to the late Peta Murphy's report into online gambling. [...] While the gambling lobby is pleading for more time and clarification, independent MPs Monique Ryan and Andrew Wilkie have been scathing about the government's response to what they say is a major public health issue, while Health Minister Mark Butler said Anthony Albanese had already flagged the key elements of the government's response in his earlier speech to the Press Club.

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## **The federal government is considering capping specialists' fees. Is that constitutional?**

The Point Australia, Other, 18/05/2026, Luke Beck

Health Minister Mark Butler has said the government is considering capping specialists' fees to reduce the gap between what Medicare covers and what specialists charge patients. The Australian Medical Association strongly opposes the idea.

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## **Ali France on the NDIS overhaul: 'Where you live shouldn't determine whether you get care'**

Women's Agenda, Other, 18/05/2026, Tarla Lambert-Patel

Canberra during Budget Week is all rushing between meetings, half-finished coffees and conversations picked up mid-thought because everyone is juggling three things at once. [...] Particularly, she points to the growing inequity between metropolitan and regional Australia, an issue that feels especially relevant as the federal government moves ahead with sweeping reforms to the scheme under Health Minister Mark Butler.

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## **Older Australians concerned about Labor's plan to reduce private health insurance rebates**

Your Life Choices, Other, 18/05/2026, Fiona Blackwood

Denise Peters has had private health insurance for 47 years. [...] Announcing the move at the National Press Club last month, Health Minister Mark Butler said the higher rebates for older Australians were introduced by the Howard government in 2004 during the China boom.

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## **ABC, ABC News, 18/05/2026, Greg Jennett**

Report by ABC reporter Fiona Blackwood. The Federal Government's plan to reduce private health rebates for older Australians has been sold as a way of making the system fairer for younger generations, but there are concerns the decision could backfire by putting more pressure on public

hospitals. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler maintains that they do not think there is a strong policy rationale to pay different Australians different levels of support for their private health insurance membership when they are on the same income simply because of age.

Also reported by: [ABC \(Hobart\)](#), [ABC \(Sydney\)](#), [ABC \(Brisbane\)](#), [ABC \(Darwin\)](#), [ABC \(Adelaide\)](#), [ABC \(Melbourne\)](#), [ABC News \(Sydney\)](#), [ABC \(Perth\)](#).

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## ABC Radio Adelaide, Afternoons, 18/05/2026, Jo Laverty

Interview with Pink Shorts Press co-founders Margot Lloyd and Emily Hart, on the winners and losers of the federal budget. Laverty states that the older Australians are one of the losers in the federal budget after it was announced that their private health insurance subsidies will be scrapped, and Federal Health Minister Mark Butler maintained that the \$3b in savings from the subsidy cuts are going to pay for more than 500,000 aged care beds. Hart says she is sad that older citizens are not being prioritised, while Lloyd states that the idea of discretionary is incorrect.

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## MINISTER MCALLISTER

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## MINISTER RAE

### Aged-care rorters 'will be forced to reimburse'

The Australian, General News, 19/05/2026, Sarah Ison, Page 4

Aged-care providers charging extortionate prices for services funded by homecare packages will be forced to reimburse elderly Australians who they've ripped off, under a suite of new protections announced by Labor following reports companies are charging clients up to seven times more than what products retail for on the open market. [...] "We'll keep working methodically, in the interests of older people, to make sure Support at Home delivers what it promised: quality care, at fair prices, close to home," Aged Care Minister Sam Rae said.

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

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### PM trotting out a tired truth

West Australian, General News, 19/05/2026, Katina Curtis, Page 13

While the Government was launching a national argument over what is fair or unfair when it comes to taxing property and trusts, it quietly published a set of numbers that should concern every Australian. [...] Aged Care Minister Sam Rae is announcing still more tweaks to these packages on Tuesday, with fresh changes aimed at guarding against unfair prices.

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### New life given to empty aged care site

Cairns Post, General News, 19/05/2026, Molly Frew & Tom Volling, Page 10

The federal government has tipped \$27.5m into rebuilding an aged care home on a Westcourt block that has sat empty since 2011. [...] Aged Care and Seniors Minister Sam Rae joined Leichhardt MP Matt Smith at the Blue Care Hollingsworth Elders Village in Portsmouth to announce the funding yesterday.

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

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## Seven Cairns, Seven Local News, 18/05/2026, Joanne Desmond & Nathan Spurling

The Pinangba Hollingsworth Elders Village is set for a multi-million dollar makeover funded by the Federal Government. Aged Care Minister Sam Rae says they want older people in their community to be treated with dignity.

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## WIN Sunshine Coast, WIN News Sunshine Coast & Wide Bay, 18/05/2026, Steve Hart

Older Australians could be slugged with hundreds of dollars in extra premiums each year after the Federal Government announced it will reduce private health insurance rebates, and industry leaders are warning that seniors cannot afford the extra cost. Aged Care and Seniors Minister Sam Rae says the modest changes will ensure that the private health insurance rebates of Australians are determined by their income, rather than by their age.

*Also reported by: [WIN Gippsland \(Sale\)](#), [WIN Townsville \(Townsville\)](#), [WIN Toowoomba \(Toowoomba\)](#), [WIN Cairns \(Cairns\)](#), [WIN Orange \(Orange\)](#), [WIN Wagga Wagga \(Wagga Wagga\)](#).*

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## DEPARTMENT

### When Budget transparency on health is a must

Croakey, Other, 18/05/2026, Charles Maskell-Knight

The devil, they say, is always in the bits of the Federal Budget least examined on the night. [...] Here he follows up on correspondence with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) about ostensibly "uncommitted" funds.

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### Open letter calls for transparency on tobacco industry interference in public policy

Croakey, Other, 18/05/2026, Alison Barrett

Ahead of day two in the current Canberra hearings of Australia's Senate Inquiry into the illicit tobacco crisis, a coalition of health organisations is calling, in an open letter to all Australians, for the tobacco industry's activities to be exposed and constrained by public health policy. [...] Today's public hearing

has heard witness testimony from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, small businesses, the Australian Tax Office and public health advocates, including Professor Michelle Jongenelis, Professor Becky Freeman, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory, Professor Tom Calma and Dr Simon Chapman.

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## **Mary Aldred MP says organised crime the biggest budget winner**

South Gippsland Sentinel-Times, Other, 19/05/2026

In August 2024, Wonthaggi had its first brush with the illicit tobacco wars that have ravaged most parts of the state by now. [...] "The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing will partially meet the cost of this measure from within existing resources."

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## **DVA lays down the law on provider integrity**

The Medical Republic, Other, 18/05/2026, Holly Payne

The Department of Veterans' Affairs is asking all health practitioners and organisations which deliver, facilitate or manage care for veterans to ensure that their "billing, documentation and referral practices" align with its new set of integrity principles and expectations. [...] Like the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the DVA also stratifies risk across several categories.

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## **RSV updates in immunisation handbook**

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 18/05/2026

The respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) chapter of the Australian Immunisation Handbook has been updated to reflect the expansion of the national RSV program to include RSV vaccine Arexvy for adults aged 75 years and older and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged from 60 years. [...] The Dept of Health has also advised that the Australian Centre for Disease Control will take on responsibility for the handbook.

[Read More](#)

## **98.9FM, The Drive Show, 18/05/2026, Clay Cassar Daley & Ian Calder**

The six people in quarantine in Western Australia after returning home from a cruise ship hit by Hantavirus have tested negative in their latest blood tests. The Federal Health Department has confirmed they are in good health and they will be only tested again if they develop symptoms.

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## **ABC Radio Canberra, PM, 18/05/2026, Samantha Donovan**

Report by ABC reporter Oliver Gordon. Former Deputy Chief Health Officer Dr Nick Coatsworth is calling for the price of legal cigarettes to be slashed to disrupt the thriving black market and allow governments to reduce the number of smokers. However, Department of Health officials have told a Senate inquiry that cutting the tax on legal cigarettes could prompt young people to start smoking.

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# AGEING AND AGED CARE

## **Arcare to build 105-suite aged care home on derelict Townsville tavern site**

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 18/05/2026, Leighton Smith

A partially-built tavern that has blighted Townsville's landscape for decades will finally be removed and replaced by a 105-suite residential aged care facility, following the block's recent sale settlement. Located at 2-10 Village Dr, Idalia, the near hectare-sized block was bought by Cairns developer Tom

Hedley in 2007, who began building a tavern before his development group went broke amid the global financial crisis.

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

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## Eldercare acquires slice of former Coca-Cola site at Thebarton

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 18/05/2026, Giuseppe Tauriello

Eldercare has snapped up a slice of the former Coca-Cola site at Thebarton, with plans to build a 200-bed aged care home. Eldercare chief executive Jane Pickering said the proposed development would help to fill the shortage of residential aged care accommodation.

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

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## “More to be done” for dementia

Aged Care Insite, Other, 18/05/2026

Senior Australian of the Year and passionate dementia advocate Professor Henry Brodaty has welcomed the federal government's investment in dementia care but said it is crucial it is "matched by a sustained and strengthened commitment to research". Last week's budget announced an additional 20 specialist dementia care programs will be rolled out across the country, while hospital programs that help older people successfully go from hospitals into residential aged care will be expanded from 11 locations to 20 thanks to a \$224.

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## Australians wait 12 months for aged care

Aged Care Insite, Other, 18/05/2026, Sabrina Lenzen

Imagine your elderly mother needs help to get out of bed, shower and manage her medications – and then waiting more than a year for that support to arrive. [...] That means many more Australians will soon need help at home or in residential aged care.

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## The end of life postcode lottery exposing our huge health gap

The Senior, Other, 18/05/2026, Carla Mascarenhas

Australia's hospitals have seen a dramatic spike in palliative care admissions, with more than half of those admissions ending with the patient dying in hospital, as experts urged older Australians to take steps to plan ahead for future health care. The data, released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), found palliative care-related hospitalisations surged from 73,600 in 2015-16 to 107,500 in 2023-24.

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## ABC Radio Darwin , Morning Show, 18/05/2026, Lara Stimpson

There are calls for the Federal Government to rethink its plans to cut the private health insurance rebates for Australians over 65. Chris Grice from the National Seniors Australia is concerned the move could impact all age groups if the decision results in greater pressure on public hospitals.

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## 2CC, Canberra Live, 18/05/2026, Leon Delaney

Interview with National Seniors Australia CEO Chris Grice, on the latest wait times report, revealing that the national median wait time for a Support at Home package is now 347 days. Grice says the Federal Government is trying to hide the results with the other announcements that were being made, and the numbers do not tell a good story in the context of what was promised, which was world-class aged care and a once-in-a-generation reform. He also says many Australians would be very disappointed to see that things have not changed, and there are no Support at Home packages available for older Australians.

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## ABC Radio Adelaide, Mornings, 18/05/2026, Rory McClaren

Interview with Chris Grice, Chief Executive, National Seniors Australia. Compere says the Federal Government's proposed changes to private health insurance rebates for over-65-year-olds are causing concern for both older Australians and South Australians who are affected. Grice points out that the impact on the finances of older Australians will be between \$226 to \$255 a year additional.

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## ABC Radio Canberra, Mornings, 18/05/2026, Saskia Mabin

National Seniors Australia has launched a fierce campaign urging the federal government to reverse its budget decision to slash private health insurance rebates for older citizens. Announced in the 2026–27 Federal Budget, the controversial policy will strip away age-based subsidies on 1 April 2027, to align seniors' rebate thresholds with those under 65.

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## ABC Radio Perth, Statewide Mornings, 18/05/2026, Nadia Mitsopoulos

Interview with Private Healthcare Australia Director of Policy and Research Ben Harris. Mitsopoulos says more than three million Australians over 65 will pay around \$240 more for their private health insurance after the Federal Government decided to cut the rebate. Harris says the Federal Government argued that the cutting of the subsidies is about intergeneration equity, but it has been noted that a large proportion of Australians over 65 are not rich and are on low incomes.

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## DISABILITY AND CARERS

### 'A shame the most marginalised are the most impacted'

The Australian, General News, 19/05/2026, Bimini Plessner, Page 1

Stuart Latham's beloved son Henry has a severe intellectual disability that means he will require assistance for the rest of his life. With needs well beyond what is provided by the NDIS and his Disability Support Pension, the importance of a financial plan to allow the 19-year-old to live a full and healthy life is paramount for his loved ones.

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

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### Australia's economic funk, and the way out

Australian Financial Review, General News, 19/05/2026, Alexander Sanchez, Page 28

Then treasurer, Paul Keating's warning 40 years ago that Australia risked becoming a banana republic did something no polished ministerial statement has managed since: the telling of an inconvenient truth with a dare to the nation.

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

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### Townsville taxi services growing to keep up with disability demand

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 18/05/2026, Daneka Hill

A Townsville disability taxi driver says she is 'under the pump' most days picking up customers as our ageing population becomes more reliant on the service. [...] "One of the biggest changes during my career has been the volume of people in wheelchairs needing a ride. The disabled population has grown... and with the ageing population there is a big demand."

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

## Ex-NSW Labor minister and NDIS campaigner says Albanese government can't rush scheme changes

ABC Online, Other, 18/05/2026, Nas Campanella & Evan Young

A former New South Wales Labor powerbroker and state disability minister pivotal in advocating for the establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has warned against rushing through sweeping changes to it. John Della Bosca, who was the New South Wales health and disability minister in the mid-2000s and later became a champion of the NDIS, said without a clear plan there were risks in moving support services back to states and territories.

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## PRIMARY CARE

### Star backs state's new \$2k IVF rebate

Hobart Mercury, General News, 19/05/2026, Elise Kaine, Page 4

IVF treatment has been a "literal lifesaver" for former Home and Away star turned radio host Christie Hayes. [...] The rebate is for Tasmanian residents accessing services provided in Tasmania by TasIVF or Fertility Tasmania and is intended to contribute to costs above Medicare or private health insurance rebates.

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

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### Households cut spending, but not in pharmacy

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 18/05/2026, Nicholas O'Donoghue

Pharmacy is one of the few sectors to see increased spending, as household budgets tighten, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia reveals. Data from the CommBank Household Spending Insights report for April 2026 shows consumers are tightening their purse-strings.

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### Chronic pain sufferers flagged as 'frequent flyers' and denied treatment in EDs

Canberra Times, Other, 18/05/2026, Lanie Tindale

Georgia Brady's stomach is permanently covered in a red rash from using a hot water bottle so much. [...] She is one of dozens of people who told and pelvic pain conditions that they are "medically gaslighted" in emergency departments (EDs).

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### The secret list of banned hospital patients that's endangering paramedics

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 18/05/2026, Grant McArthur & Kieran Rooney

Victorian public hospitals are using secret "not welcome lists" to ban aggressive patients in a move paramedics argue is putting them and patients at risk as they are turned away from emergency departments. Despite Ambulance Victoria making repeated requests for access to the lists so it can better protect paramedics, streamline care and ensure patient safety, the state's health department has refused to hand them over.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

## Inquiry told tobacco market to be 'fully illicit'

Canberra Times, General News, 19/05/2026, Abe Maddison, Page 2

Illicit tobacco sales are destroying the livelihoods of legitimate retailers and the market will be "fully illicit" within two years, a Senate inquiry has been told. Demand for illegal tobacco has exploded in Australia because of large tax increases on legal products.

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

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## Our falling birthrate is a crisis

Courier Mail, General News, 19/05/2026, Jaimee Rogers, Page 19

There is a quiet crisis unfolding in this country. Australia is not having enough children.

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## Tobacco lobby exploiting organised crime war, ominous letter warns

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 18/05/2026, Sarah Booth

The violent tobacco wars are being exploited by cigarette companies to push for weaker anti-smoking measures, multiple leading health organisations have warned. [...] It was signed by 16 organisations including the Cancer Council, Asthma Australia and the Heart Foundation and comes as organised crime gangs battle to control the lucrative market for untaxed — and therefore significantly cheaper — cigarettes.

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

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## 'Huge step forward': Ozempic endorsed to treat obesity and heart disease in Australian first

SBS, Other, 18/05/2026, Rachael Knowles

Tammy Merton has struggled with obesity for much of her adult life. [...] Merton's lived experience has informed Australia's first Clinical Consensus Statement on Obesity and Cardiovascular disease, which has endorsed the use of Semaglutide or GLP-1 medications for weight management in those at risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD).

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## FIVEAA, Afternoons, 18/05/2026, Stacy Lee

Interview with Cancer Council Victoria CEO Todd Harper. Harper says the tobacco industry always put self-interest ahead of public interest, and it has been opposing measures that effectively help smokers quit. He notes that almost one in five cancer deaths are attributed to smoking, but the industry still wants to cut the price.

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

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## CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

### Sobering data on motor neuron disease mortality in Australia

Medicine Today, Other, 18/05/2026, Melanie Hinze

Motor neuron disease (MND) mortality in Australia has more than tripled over the past four decades, with the disease accounting for one in 234 Australian deaths in 2023, according to new research. The population-based study, published in the Medical Journal of Australia, analysed all MND mortality and Australian population data from 1 January 1986 to 31 December 2023, obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

## Channel 10, 10 News, 18/05/2026, Sandra Sully

A major study by the QIMR Berghofer, which involved 11,000 Australians with Parkinson's disease, has found that men experienced more memory and sleep issues, while reports of pain, falls, depression, and anxiety are more common among women. Parkinson's disease is a very complex condition, and it is caused by a mixture of genetic and environmental factors, with 10 million people worldwide living with it.

Also reported by: [Channel 10 \(Brisbane\)](#), [Channel 10 \(Adelaide\)](#), [Channel 10 \(Perth\)](#).

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## Channel 7, Seven News, 18/05/2026, Peter Mitchell

Australia's leading heart experts are recommending weight loss drugs be used to help reduce heart attack and strokes, and the calls are adding pressure on the Federal Government to subsidise the medications so more people can afford them. New research has found that GLP-1 medications may protect the heart beyond helping people lose weight, and the Heart Foundation claims the drugs could benefit thousands of Australians.

Also reported by: [Channel 7 \(Brisbane\)](#), [Channel 7 \(Adelaide\)](#), [Channel 7 \(Perth\)](#).

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## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

### How much gaming is too much? Scientist seeks definitive answer for mental health

Adelaide Now, Other, 19/05/2026, Liliana Molina

It's the battle being fought in lounge rooms and bedrooms worldwide: Is gaming good or bad for mental health? [...] He is leading international efforts to understand how esports affects mental health in an industry that's rapidly approaching Olympic recognition and engages more participants than traditional sports.

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

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## IMMUNISATION

### Urgent flu season warning

Hobart Mercury, General News, 19/05/2026, Alison Foletta, Page 3

After a "horror season" of flu that saw deaths rise and hospitals stretched, Tasmanians are being urged to get vaccinated, with health experts warning "vaccine fatigue" is leaving our most vulnerable exposed. Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Tasmanian chair Dr Toby Gardner said there had been a distinct drop in people getting their flu shots, which could mean more vulnerable Tasmanians end up in hospital or even dying.

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### Infant RSV hospitalisations down 44% with maternal vax and nirsevimab programs: first data

Australian Doctor, Other, 18/05/2026, Bella Rough

Hospitals have seen 44% fewer newborns with acute respiratory syncytial virus infection since the new immunisation programs for pregnant women and infants began, the first real-world Australian evidence shows. The surveillance data from the PAEDS-FluCAN Network also suggests effectiveness of 81% for

maternal vaccination and 90% for nirsevimab — the immunotherapy given to newborns — researchers wrote in a preprint last week.

[Read More](#)

## Diphtheria death in Northern Territory prompts urgent vaccination calls amid outbreak

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 18/05/2026, Fia Walsh

The Northern Territory has recorded Australia's first diphtheria death in almost a decade as health authorities battle an escalating outbreak with 145 cases reported. [...] NT Health said vaccination remained the "most important measure for preventing, protecting and reducing transmission".

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

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### Aussies losing their medical wanderlust

Northern Territory News, General News, 19/05/2026, Page 6

Australians are becoming more cautious about travelling overseas for medical procedures. Travel insurance provider Insure&Go surveyed Australians on medical tourism in late 2023 and has now repeated the research.

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

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### NT Government to hold 'crisis talks' over Darwin Private Hospital maternity services

Northern Territory News, Other, 18/05/2026, Gera Kazakov

"Crisis talks" are due to take place about the future of private maternity services in the Northern Territory, as a Territory minister and a federal MP trade barbs about why the service has been missing for almost 12 months. [...] "While we acknowledge that the appointed receivers are undertaking their legal obligations, we are now approaching one year since the receivers were appointed and Territorians still have no certainty about the future of private healthcare in the Territory," NT Health Minister Steve Edgington said

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

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

### Inside the Southern Cross University trial tackling climate PTSD with MDMA

Adelaide Now, Other, 19/05/2026, Liliana Molina

When catastrophic floods devastated Australia's NSW Northern Rivers region in 2022, followed by landslides, the physical damage was undeniable. What wasn't immediately visible was the psychological toll on survivors – many of whom are still grappling with post-traumatic stress disorder years later, some still without permanent homes.

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### Australian sleep expert on the verge of first targeted drug to treat sleep apnoea

Adelaide Now, Other, 19/05/2026

Improving people's sleep is what keeps Professor Danny Eckert up at night. [...] More than one million Australians have obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA).

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

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## Melbourne researcher's new frontier in cancer treatment aims to control the disease's environment

The Courier Mail, Other, 19/05/2026

Understanding cancer isn't just about the tumour itself –it's about the environment around it. That's a simple starting point when speaking to Professor Tracy Putoczki and her amazing work within cancer research.

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

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## How haematologist Tim Hughes pioneered treatment-free remission for cancer patients

The Mercury, Other, 19/05/2026

For Professor Tim Hughes, progress in cancer research isn't just measured by big headlines and column inches – it's about the patients he's been treating for years and their quality of life. A haematologist based in Adelaide, Professor Hughes has spent more than two decades focused on chronic myeloid leukaemia, a blood cancer that, during that time, has been completely transformed.

[Read More](#)

## Breast cancer risk reduction needs lifestyle modification throughout the life course

Medicine Today, Other, 18/05/2026, Melanie Hinze

Alcohol consumption, overweight or obesity, and being without a partner are each independently associated with an increased risk of breast cancer in Australian women from midlife into older age, according to new research. The longitudinal cohort study, published in BMJ Open, used data from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health 1946 to 1951 birth cohort linked with the Australian Cancer Database.

[Read More](#)

## Night-to-night changes in OSA severity linked to heart attack, heart failure and stroke

Medicine Today, Other, 18/05/2026, Rebecca Jenkins

High night-to-night variability in obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) severity is linked to higher odds of nonfatal major cardiovascular and cerebrovascular events (MACCEs), an Australian study finds. Researchers analysed data from 3159 adults (19% female, median age 49 years) who had used an under-mattress sensor to track nightly OSA variability over six months and then answered questions about their general health, doctor-diagnosed disorders and health-related behaviours.

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### Pharmacy bodies to 'all in for reconciliation'

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 18/05/2026, Nicholas O'Donoghue

"Wherever you practice... you play a role in ensuring First Nations people receive care that is considered, culturally safe, respectful and responsive," a pharmacy leader tells the profession. Pharmacy staff are being urged to strengthen their commitment to delivering culturally safe care when supporting Indigenous patients through the Closing the Gap (CtG) PBS co-payment program.

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## Cultural safety key to CTG program

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 18/05/2026

Pharmacy peak bodies are calling on pharmacy professionals to strengthen their commitment to delivering culturally safe care when supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the Closing the Gap (CTG) PBS Co-payment Program. The initiative helps improve access to affordable medicines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, supporting efforts to reduce health inequities, with a recent assessment finding it had made 'modest progress' towards this goal.

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## PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

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## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Vital reforms are needed for our nurses

Canberra Times, Other, 18/05/2026

Although International Nurses Day, which coincided with the delivery of the federal budget last Tuesday, was overshadowed by events in Canberra the leaders of the profession used that as an opportunity to call for vital reforms. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation called on the federal government to address workplace violence, ease cost-of-living pressures for front-line workers, and invest in safer staffing levels.

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### Sector invited to use, shape aged care jobs platform

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 18/05/2026, Natasha Egan

Social enterprise Workinitiatives is inviting aged care providers to work with them to address their workforce challenges and to inform the ongoing development of a new jobs and skills platform.[...] The group soft launched the WorkinAgedCare platform at this month's Innovation Transforming Aged Care Conference in Brisbane.

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## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

### Dispensing of oral anti-cancer medications across Australia over time

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, General News, 01/05/2026, Michael J Leach, Page 80

Oral anti-cancer medications (OAMs) are those therapeutic agents administered via the oral route to treat any of the various cancer types for which they are indicated.. [...] Aggregate data on dispensing counts for individual OAM products and the group of any (oral/parenteral) AMs subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) or Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS),

broken down by state/ territory of pharmacy and year of claim processing, were sourced from Services Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule Item Reports and Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule Group Reports, respectively.

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## Artificial intelligence set to slash endometriosis diagnosis from six years to months

The Courier Mail, Other, 19/05/2026

As a public health researcher and Research Co-Lead of Chronic Reproductive Diseases at the Robinson Research Institute, Associate Professor Avery has built a career around tackling chronic reproductive conditions such as endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Her work is now at the forefront of a growing push to modernise how endometriosis is detected, using artificial intelligence to reduce diagnosis times and improve outcomes for patients.

[Read More](#)

## Experts push for subsidised weight loss drugs to prevent heart attacks

7News.com.au, Other, 18/05/2026, Jennifer Bechwati

Australia's leading heart experts are recommending weight loss drugs be used to help reduce heart attacks and strokes, adding pressure on the federal government to subsidise the medications so more people can afford them. [...] The Heart Foundation on Monday recommended the drugs for patients with heart disease or high cardiac risk in new national obesity guidelines, which could benefit thousands of Australians.

[Read More](#)

## Melbourne psychiatrist refuses new patients who don't consent to AI note-taking

The Guardian, Other, 19/05/2026, Josh Taylor

A Melbourne psychiatrist has refused new patients unless they agree to allow her to use an AI scribe to transcribe the conversations in their sessions. AI-driven note taking tools are becoming popular within the medical industry – with two in five general practitioners now using such scribes, according to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

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# MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

## Anger as AI work goes OS

Daily Telegraph, General News, 19/05/2026, Eilidh Sproul-Mellis, Page 17

Australian insurance chatbots built in San Francisco and locally scanned mammograms sent to South Korea this is the new reality for consumers, who are missing out on homegrown solutions to modern problems because big business and governments are not backing Australian-made AI. [...] "At the time BreastScreen NSW undertook procurement, and as remains the case today, there was no TGA-approved Australian commercial provider of this technology," Cancer Institute NSW CEO Tracey O'Brien said.

Also reported by: [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Adelaide Advertiser \(Adelaide\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Darwin\)](#)

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## Scientists use artificial intelligence to design viruses that hunt and kill superbugs

Adelaide Now, Other, 19/05/2026, NewsCorp Australia

From the smallest organisms on Earth may come some of the biggest breakthroughs in science. [...] But perhaps the most fascinating frontier of his work is the use of artificial intelligence to design viruses that can hunt down and kill harmful bacteria.

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## BRCA tests: Should Medicare open up funding so men with prostate cancer can 'save their daughters'?

Australian Doctor, Other, 18/05/2026, Bella Rough

Men are being denied tests "that could save their daughters", says the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, which wants BRCA testing funded more liberally for men with prostate cancer. BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations are linked to a 5-10% absolute rise in lifetime prostate cancer risk, despite being more famously linked to breast cancer.

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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### Regulator ban rocks doctors college

The Australian, General News, 19/05/2026, Penny Timms Senior, Page 3

The president-elect of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians has been sensationally suspended and banned from taking over as president until at least mid-September following allegations she has breached a workplace health and safety directive. The suspension comes at the direction of Australia's normally timid charity regulator and means Dr Sharmila Chandran cannot take up her presidency at the end of the month.

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

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### 'Dishonest' nurse put patients at risk

Ballarat Courier, General News, 19/05/2026, Bryan Hoadley, Page 3

A former Ballarat nurse lied about his qualifications on LinkedIn and put patients at risk by practising in breach of his registration conditions, a tribunal has determined. [...] In June 2021, Christoffelsz started work with Ballarat Health Services in a position which required him to have clinical oversight of staff, and he never requested a supervisor or supervision plan with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), or sought approval of a place of practice.

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### Recency of practice and CDP changes

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 18/05/2026

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and National Boards are consulting on proposed changes to recency of practice and continuing professional development (CPD) registration standards, with pharmacists invited to have their say. Key proposed changes around recency of practice include requiring 450 hours of practice in the last three years or 150 hours of practice in the last 12 months, and emphasising practitioners' responsibilities when moving to a new area of practice.

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## AUSTRALIAN CDC

### Ebola cases a global emergency

The Australian, International News, 19/05/2026, Page 8

The World Health Organisation has declared a global health emergency over an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, saying the epidemic could still be spreading undetected. Around 80 deaths and more than 200 possible cases have been recorded so far, including four deaths among health workers, the UN health agency said.

Also reported by: [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Daily Telegraph \(Sydney\)](#), [7News.com.au \(Online\)](#), [ABC Online \(Online\)](#).

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## Australia joins fight against ebola threat

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 19/05/2026, Joseph Olbrycht-Palmer, Page 11

Australian health officials are working with international counterparts to respond to the deadly ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda, a minister has said. [...] Ebola has never been reported in Australia.

Also reported by: [Courier Mail \(Brisbane\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Darwin\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Geelong\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Yahoo! News Australia \(Online\)](#).

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## First diphtheria death in almost a decade in NT

Northern Territory News, General News, 19/05/2026, Fia Walsh, Page 5

The Northern Territory has recorded the country's first death from diphtheria in almost a decade, according to reports. NT Health said it was awaiting results from the autopsy of a "possible diphtheria death" and was unable to confirm at this time.

Also reported by: [ABC Online \(Online\)](#), [SBS \(Online\)](#).

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## Disease back

Northern Territory News, Editorials, 19/05/2026, Page 14

The death of a Northern Territory resident from suspected diphtheria should send shockwaves through not only the Territory, but Australia more broadly. In recent weeks, the NT recorded what is suspected as Australia's first death from the rare but highly contagious disease in almost a decade.

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## Australia eliminates trachoma

Medicine Today, Other, 18/05/2026

The WHO has validated Australia for eliminating trachoma as a public health problem, which it says marks a significant milestone in the health of Indigenous peoples and in global efforts to combat neglected tropical diseases. Australia is the 30th country to have successfully eliminated trachoma, the world's leading infectious cause of blindness, contributing to global progress towards the targets set out in the WHO road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030.

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## ABC, 7:30, 18/05/2026, Sarah Ferguson

Interview with Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Chair Jane Halton, on the World Health Organization declaring an emergency of international concern due to the Ebola virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Halton states that any congested urban environment is the worst kind of place for such outbreaks to get into, making it difficult to protect people, including health care workers. She notes that the virus spreads through bodily fluids, and there are still no vaccines available to treat it.

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## ABC, ABC News, 18/05/2026, Jeremy Fernandez

The World Health Organization has declared a global emergency over the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. While it does not reach the criteria of a pandemic, the WHO says there is a high risk it could spread to neighbouring countries.

Similar coverage reported by: [Channel 9 \(Brisbane\)](#), [Channel 7 \(Adelaide\)](#), [Channel 7 \(Melbourne\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Adelaide\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Sydney\)](#), [Channel 9 \(Perth\)](#), [Channel 7 \(Perth\)](#).

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## ABC News, Afternoon Briefing, 18/05/2026, Patricia Karvelas

Interview with CSIRO Health and Biosecurity Research Unit Head Brett Sutton, on the Ebola outbreak in Africa. Sutton notes that there have been 40 outbreaks over the 50 years since the Ebola virus was first identified in Africa, but there have not been vaccines and therapeutics that are available for the Bundibugyo and Zaire strains. He also says there are already over 240 suspected cases and 80 deaths, making it an indication that there has been significant transmission in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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

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### **Channel 10, 10 News, 18/05/2026, Jennifer Keyte**

Australian medical emergency teams are standing by to fly into the heart of an Ebola outbreak in Central Africa. The disease has already crossed borders and it has been declared by the World Health Organization as a public health emergency of international concern.

Also reported by: [Channel 10 \(Sydney\)](#), [Channel 10 \(Brisbane\)](#), [Channel 10 \(Adelaide\)](#), [Channel 10 \(Perth\)](#).

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### **Sky News Live, Afternoon Agenda, 18/05/2026, Tom Connell**

The World Health Organization has declared an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo to be a public health emergency. More than 80 deaths have been recorded, and officials are concerned the virus may have already spread to neighbouring Uganda.

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### **Sky News Live, AM Agenda, 18/05/2026, Laura Jayes**

Canada has recorded a confirmed case of Hantavirus linked to the cruise ship outbreak. One of four Canadians who was on the vessel was tested positive after developing mild symptoms. Six people from Australia and New Zealand are currently isolating in Perth at a quarantine facility after returning from the ship.

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### **2CC, Canberra Live, 18/05/2026, Leon Delaney**

The World Health Organization is warning that the Ebola outbreak in Central Africa could get much larger after declaring it a public health emergency of international concern. There have been 246 suspected cases of Ebola and at least 80 deaths reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Similar coverage reported by: [ABC Radio Canberra \(Canberra\)](#), [ABC Radio Sydney \(Sydney\)](#).

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### **4BC, Drive, 18/05/2026, Gary Hardgrave**

Hardgrave says the World Health Organization has declared a public health emergency of international concern after an outbreak of Ebola in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. He states that about 88 people have died, and there have been 250 suspected cases as of Saturday, while the WHO also noted that the risk is highest for those neighbouring countries.

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### **ABC Radio Adelaide, Evenings, 18/05/2026, Spence Denny**

Public health advocates are urging global leaders and groups to support urgent efforts to control the spread of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which led to the World Health Organization declaring it a public health emergency of international concern. Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response Co-Chair Helen Clark says the outbreak must be contained immediately.

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### **ABC Radio Canberra, PM, 18/05/2026, Samantha Donovan**

Interview with Southern Cross University Faculty of Health Dr Peter Bai James. Donovan says the

World Health Organization has declared the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo a public health emergency of international concern, with warnings that the virus could spread to neighbouring countries, including Uganda. James says the Ebola virus is transferred mainly by direct contact with an infected person, and even though lessons have been learnt, the uniqueness of the current outbreak is due to factors such as the current conflict and humanitarian issues, which are affecting medical response.

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## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### **Sky News Live, Afternoon Agenda, 18/05/2026, Tom Connell**

Sky News can reveal peptide-related visits to a Gold Coast syringe program have jumped almost six-fold in 12 months. Several peptide medicines, such as Ozempic, are regulated by the TGA, but doctors and experts are concerned that the illegal peptide market is now exploding online because social media influencers claim them as a shortcut to weight loss, muscle gain, anti-aging, and better skin.

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### **Radio National, Life Matters, 18/05/2026, Tegan Taylor**

Interview with University of Queensland Centre for Health Services Research senior research fellow Dr Timothy Piatkowski, on the rise of illegal peptides being used as supplements, leaving young people at risk. Piatkowski says young people do not have the health literacy or discernment to see that some of the claims are either far-fetched or wrong. Taylor notes that the peptides being sold on social media are not approved and regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, but people are still getting their hands on them.

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## OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

### **Poison vodka**

Herald Sun, General News, 19/05/2026, Aris Schuler-Shah, Page 1

Bottles of vodka containing more than 10 times the legal limit of methanol are being sold in Melbourne's bottle shops as experts warn that lives are at risk from the sprawling black market. Forensic lab tests of the illicit vodka for dangerous chemicals has uncovered plastic contaminants and methanol, with one in three bottle shops now estimated to be selling illegal booze.

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### **Collingwood sobering-up centre to close less than four years after public intoxication reforms**

ABC Online, Other, 18/05/2026, Rachel Eddie

Victoria's sobering-up centre in Collingwood will close next year, ending a support service for people found drunk in public less than four years after the offence was abolished. [...] The Department of Health, which confirmed the closure after questions from the ABC last week, insisted dedicated centres for Aboriginal people and outreach for the general population would continue.

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

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