



TODAY'S NEWS

Friday, 22nd May 2026

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LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Sydney Morning Herald](#) (page 2) reports that junior doctors at Nepean Hospital have publicised an official memo they say was a thinly-veiled threat to their careers.
- The [Canberra Times](#) (page 2) reports that Canberra Health Service doctors have launched industrial action over a pay dispute, including a 15-minute stop work next week.
- The [NT News](#) (page 3) reports that Minister for Health Mark Butler has unveiled a \$7.2 million funding package to fight Australia's worsening diphtheria outbreak. *Also reported by:* [West Australian](#), [ABC Online](#), [SBS News](#), [9News](#), [Sky News](#)
- The [Hobart Mercury](#) (page 3) reports that Thursday's Tasmanian state budget cut funding to health services by \$700 million, with overall health spending boosted by \$5.05 billion from the National Health Reform Agreement.
- The [Sydney Morning Herald](#) (page 8) reports that the Medical Research Future Fund will disburse a guaranteed \$1 billion annually, with children's cancer and epilepsy research to be prioritised, Minister for Health Mark Butler has announced.
- The [Herald Sun](#) (page 8) reports that senior Ambulance Victoria executive Jesse Madison will leave the role after less than two years.

- The [Herald Sun](#) (page 8) reports that Victorian Health Minister Harriet Shing said the state's ballooning surgery waitlist is the product of a growing and ageing population.
- The [Herald Sun](#) (page 8) reports that Victorian allied healthcare workers will begin stage one industrial action from next week, the union saying the state government has stalled EBA negotiations for the last eight months.

MINISTER BUTLER

Children's cancer and epilepsy research boosted by new funding

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 22/05/2026, Brittany Busch, Page 8

Children's cancer and epilepsy research will be prioritised in a long-awaited release from the nation's unspent medical research fund, as the government moves to correct a chronic shortfall of investment in Australian research. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler yesterday billed the move as a transformation of health and medical research.

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

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\$7.2m to combat surge in disease

Northern Territory News, General News, 22/05/2026, Fia Walsh, Page 3

The federal government has committed \$7.2m to help the Northern Territory and Aboriginal community controlled health sector respond to the diphtheria outbreak that has reportedly claimed one life. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler emphasised that vaccination remained the best defence against the disease.

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

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Medical FIFO surge to fight diphtheria

West Australian, General News, 22/05/2026, Robyn Wuth and Lloyd Jones, Page 18

One of Australia's worst diphtheria outbreaks has highlighted a shortfall in health workers in remote communities, with fly-in nurses and doctors called in to help combat the spread of the disease. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler on Tuesday announced \$7.2 million to contain the outbreak, stressing the importance of getting vaccinated.

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Australia's largest diphtheria outbreak prompts \$7.2m federal vaccine blitz

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Stephanie Dazell and Paige Cockburn

The federal government has stepped in to address a diphtheria outbreak that has crossed several state borders, unveiling a multi-million dollar package for more vaccines and the workforce to deliver them, as it seeks to quell the largest outbreak of the disease since records began. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said while the package was primarily for the Northern Territory, he would be writing to other affected states to see if they also needed Commonwealth support.

Similar coverage: [SBS \(Online\)](#), [9News \(Online\)](#), [Sky News Australia \(Online\)](#), [InDaily SA \(Online\)](#), [InQueensland \(Online\)](#), [The New Daily \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Oncology Republic \(Online\)](#).

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ABC News, ABC National News, 21/05/2026, Joe O'Brien

Australia is facing its largest recorded diphtheria outbreak, with around 230 cases this year and ongoing spread prompting nationwide efforts to contain it. The federal government has committed more

than \$7m for vaccines and surge workforce support. Health Minister Mark Butler says authorities are fully focused on controlling the outbreak.

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ABC News, Mornings, 21/05/2026, Kathryn Robinson

Press conference with Minister for Health Mark Butler. Butler says the diphtheria outbreak remains concentrated mainly in the NT, especially remote and very remote communities, but it has also spread into the Kimberley, parts of SA's APY lands, and Qld. He says the Commonwealth responds by supplying thousands of vaccine doses and funding extra workforce support so health teams can deliver boosters and antibiotics quickly in affected regions

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Channel 10, 10 News, 21/05/2026, Natalie Forrest

Australia faces its worst diphtheria outbreak on record, with more than 230 cases nationwide, including over 80 in the Kimberley. The federal government has announced a \$7m response package. Health Minister Mark Butler said he will write to affected states and territories to assess further support needs from the Commonwealth.

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Channel 9, Nine News, 21/05/2026, Peter Overton

More than \$7m in federal funding is being deployed to contain Australia's worst diphtheria outbreak in 35 years, with 230 cases reported across Qld, SA, WA, and the NT, mainly in remote communities. Health Minister Mark Butler says the outbreak is very serious and stresses the need for rapid vaccination to bring it under control.

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SBS, World News Australia, 21/05/2026, Richelle Harrison Plesse

Health Minister Mark Butler has announced a \$7.2m package to combat Australia's worst diphtheria outbreak in 35 years, including funding for the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre and support for Aboriginal community controlled health services.

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ABC Alice Springs, Breakfast, 21/05/2026, Stewart Brash

Interview with Minister for Health Mark Butler about the \$7.2m response to the diphtheria outbreak. Butler says the funding boosts frontline workforce capacity through Aboriginal community controlled health services and the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre to deliver vaccines and treatment across affected regions. He says the outbreak remains concentrated in the NT but has spread into surrounding states.

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PM pushes vaccinations with respiratory disease cases rising

Border Mail, General News, 21/05/2026, Aaron Bunch, Page 12

Australia's worst diphtheria outbreak in decades continues to grow, with the Prime Minister joining calls for at-risk people to get vaccinated. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said the current outbreak was about 30 times greater than the average number of diphtheria cases recorded nationally over the past five years.

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Deadly disease outbreak linked to waning vaccinations

Gladstone Today, General News, 21/05/2026, Lloyd Jones, Page 31

A dip in vaccination rates has been blamed for one of Australia's worst diphtheria outbreaks as the rare respiratory disease continues to spread. Hundreds of cases spanning three states and a territory have been reported amid fears the highly contagious infection has claimed a life in an outback community.

[...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler described it as the biggest diphtheria outbreak in Australia for decades.

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NT Health authorities MIA as diphtheria spreads across Indigenous remote communities

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Jack Hislop

The largest outbreak of diphtheria since Australian records began is spreading through the outback. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said yesterday the outbreak was "very, very concerning", particularly in the NT.

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Health expert suggests Australia is hurtling towards next virus outbreak as low vaccine rates hit herd immunity

NEWS.com.au, Other, 21/05/2026, Adrian Zorzut

Health professionals have warned Australia could be hurtling towards the next virus outbreak as cases of diphtheria wreak havoc across rural communities. [...] It comes as federal health minister Mark Butler said Australia was experiencing the biggest outbreak of diphtheria "ever seen".

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

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Public health doctor urges jabs as diphtheria outbreak breaches border

regiontnq.com.au, Other, 21/05/2026, Luke Mortimer

The biggest diphtheria outbreak ever recorded in Australia has spread from the Northern Territory into Queensland about four years after an upsurge in cases led to a mass vaccination campaign in Cape York's Wujal Wujal community. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said he was "very concerned" about "probably the biggest diphtheria outbreak we've seen, certainly for decades".

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Aaron Keith Bynum: Man charged after alleged online mass shooting threat tied to hantavirus lockdown fears

Thenightly.com.au, Other, 21/05/2026, Kimberley Braddish

A man has been charged after authorities allege he made threats to carry out a mass shooting at a Walmart if a hantavirus outbreak led to renewed COVID-style lockdowns. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said last week the approach reflected the seriousness of the situation. [...] A Department of Health, Disability and Ageing spokesman confirmed the latest testing results showed no sign of infection among the group.

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Critics argue government's response to aged care price caps 'a total joke'

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Evelyn Manfield

[...] Aged Care Minister Sam Rae previously said price caps would "ensure that no older person is inappropriately charged for the services". [...] Health Minister Mark Butler also used the National Disability Insurance Scheme as an example of where, when price caps are set too high, providers all increase their fees to charge the maximum, rather than using it as a ceiling.

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Government delays Support at Home price caps

Aged Care Insite, Other, 21/05/2026, Stefanie Schultz

The federal government has delayed the introduction of price caps for the Support at Home program, citing market volatility, while announcing new measures to strengthen consumer protections and prevent older Australians from being charged unreasonable fees. [...] Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler told ABC Radio National the government did not want to repeat mistakes seen in other systems.

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NDIS integrity inquiry hears raft of alarming claims and calls for greater whistleblower protections

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Evan Young

A support worker cut keys to a deafblind National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant's home without their knowledge, a parliamentary inquiry has been told. [...] The bill also includes measures to plug gaps in oversight and require more providers to register with the scheme, while also allowing more automated decision-making and giving federal minister Mark Butler sweeping powers to cut certain types of supports.

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NDIS stakeholders as barriers to reform

The Mandarin, Other, 21/05/2026, Stephen Duckett

Think back to the days before the NDIS: services were inadequate and underfunded, people with disabilities had their dignity stripped away, and support was offered at the whim of providers. [...] The government's response to this major change in spending expectations was announced in a National Press Club speech by Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Mark Butler, and confirmed in the budget.

[Read More](#)

Saving the NDIS or shrinking it? History has a warning for Mark Butler

Crikey, Other, 21/05/2026, Tom Keating

On May 14, Health Minister Mark Butler introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Securing the NDIS for Future Generations) Bill to federal parliament. He called it an act of stewardship, a necessary intervention to protect a scheme under unsustainable fiscal pressure.

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Govt funding new GP practices in region with 'cultural' resistance to bulk-billing: Butler

Australian Doctor, Other, 21/05/2026, Rachel Carter

A "cultural issue" at GP practices has undermined bulk-billing in the region where the government is funding six new clinics, Minister for Health and Ageing Mark Butler says. Mr Butler said the Federal Government had no choice but to intervene in NSW's Central Coast and Hunter districts because local GPs had resisted bulk-billing for "no rational reason".

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Budget: whopping subsidies, private health profiteering as waiting lists rise

Michael West Media, Other, 21/05/2026, Claudia Weisenberger

[...] A 2023 Finity report commissioned by the Health Department found cutting over-65 rebates would save \$482 million in rebate costs but shift \$547 million to the public system, a net loss. Health Minister Mark Butler scrapped these rebates anyway, calling them 'unfair'—despite his own department's advice. The contradiction reveals the core problem: not whether subsidies are necessary, but where the money goes.

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Casey seniors fear losing private health cover under rebate overhaul

Star Community, Other, 21/05/2026, Violet Li

Casey seniors fear they would have to fall back on an already stretched public health system under the Federal Government's proposed overhaul to the private health insurance rebate. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler defended the proposed changes, saying the current system was unfair because households on the same income received different levels of government support based solely on age.

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Federal budget slammed by doctors for 'massive underspend' on rural

health

Weekly Times Now, Other, 21/05/2026, Kate Dowler

Rural health advocates say the federal budget has reinforced the continuation of a "massive underspend in rural, remote, and regional Australia" on health. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler's office was contacted for comment.

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MINISTER MCALLISTER

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MINISTER RAE

Critics argue government's response to aged care price caps 'a total joke'

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Evelyn Manfield

[...] Aged Care Minister Sam Rae previously said price caps would "ensure that no older person is inappropriately charged for the services". [...] Health Minister Mark Butler also used the National Disability Insurance Scheme as an example of where, when price caps are set too high, providers all increase their fees to charge the maximum, rather than using it as a ceiling.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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ASSISTANT MINISTER WHITE

New hearing support centre opens in Clarence

Eastern Shore Sun, General News, 01/05/2026, Page 27

A new specialist hearing support centre has opened in Montagu Bay, providing families across southern Tasmania with greater access to services for children with hearing loss. [...] The opening was attended by Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Rebecca White, who said the service would help more Tasmanian families access specialist care closer to home.

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WIN Cairns, WIN News Far North Queensland, 21/05/2026, Steve Hart

Researchers at the Menzies Institute say up to 80% of strokes are preventable, despite stroke being a leading cause of death and disability in Australia. A new world-first online course aims to improve public awareness of stroke symptoms and risk reduction. Assistant Health Minister Rebecca White says courses like this one are an excellent way to increase understanding within the community and among health professionals.

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DEPARTMENT

Practical help for autism

Kalgoorlie Miner, General News, 22/05/2026, Isabella Davis, Page 2

Members of an autism support network will travel to Kalgoorlie-Boulder next week to support the local neurodivergent community. South West Autism Network will meet residents and services to provide information and practical help for disability and autism-related needs. [...] SWAN will be in Kalgoorlie-Boulder from May 25 to 31 on a trip funded by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

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

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Warning over private script claims

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 21/05/2026, Page 3

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing is reminding pharmacy owners and dispensing pharmacists that a private prescription cannot be claimed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). The department noted that it continues to identify incorrect PBS claims for the supply of medicines from private (non-PBS) prescriptions in breach of the National Health Act 1953, which requires pharmacists to supply only what is directed on the prescription.

Similar coverage: [Pharma In Focus \(Online\)](#).

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Budget: whopping subsidies, private health profiteering as waiting lists rise

Michael West Media, Other, 21/05/2026, Claudia Weisenberger

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Australia experiencing 'worst diphtheria outbreak in decades'

Oncology Republic, Other, 21/05/2026, Lincoln Tracy

[...] "Vaccination for diphtheria is safe and it is an incredibly effective tool against disease. We have enough vaccine and we are making sure it is getting to the right communities," said Federal Health Minister Mark Butler. [...] Information about which diphtheria vaccines are covered under the National Immunisation Program is available on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing website.

[Read More](#)

Allied health necessary for ageing in place

Community Care Review, Other, 21/05/2026, Katarina Lloyd Jones

As Australia's population ages, the need to move away from episodic and reactive care becomes more pressing – with allied health playing a key role. This was the core message of chief allied health officer Anita Hobson Powell's address on day one of the Positive Ageing Summit in Adelaide this week.

[Read More](#)

Gamechanger McCabe shifted sideways by DoHDA

The Medical Republic, Other, 21/05/2026, Cate Swannell

The digital health sector is about to lose one of its best assets with the news that top public servant Daniel McCabe is being moved sideways to take on another project in the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. Mr McCabe, currently first assistant secretary of the DoHDA's Medicare benefits and digital health division, will move to the technology assessment and access division in the next few weeks.

Also reported by: [Health Services Daily \(Online\)](#).

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Peptide craze sparks Lancet warning

Oncology Republic, Other, 21/05/2026, Amanda Sheppard

A University of Queensland researcher has co-penned an article in The Lancet that intensifies calls for tougher regulation and stronger clinical preparedness amid the rapid rise in illegal injectable peptide use among young Australians. [...] Professor Anthony Lawler, deputy secretary of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and head of the TGA, said Australians "should be very cautious about buying peptide products online, particularly from overseas websites or through online platforms or social media".

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DoHDA eyes wearables integration with healthcare identifiers

Health Services Daily, Other, 21/05/2026, Cate Swannell

Healthcare identifiers could be opened to consumer devices as Canberra expands My Health Record to medicines and chronic care data.

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National framework targets fragmented health data standards

IDM.net.au, Other, 21/05/2026

The Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) concedes adoption of standards remains "sporadic" more than two decades after foundational digital health work began in Australia but claims a new framework will drive uptake. [...] The framework sets out five recommendations to be pursued with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA), Standards Development Organisations and jurisdictions.

[Read More](#)

Radio National, AM, 21/05/2026, Barbara Miller

States and territories are awaiting further federal support to scale up immunisations as the diphtheria outbreak continues to spread across Australia. NAATSIHWP CEO Karl Briscoe is calling for a stronger workforce response and a coordinated national strategy that listens to Indigenous voices. The Department of Health says it is pursuing a multi-layered vaccination approach and increasing engagement with First Nations communities to lift childhood immunisation rates.

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Stonepeak closes in on \$2.5bn Estia buyout

The Australian, Business News, 22/05/2026, Page 14

Stonepeak Infrastructure Partners is believed to be close to buying aged-care operator Estia Health, with the New York-based investor understood to be in advanced discussions at a price of around \$2.5bn. The deal would represent a significant return for Boston-based Bain Capital, which took Estia private in 2023 for \$838m.

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Home care appears less profitable under Support at Home

Australian Ageing Agenda, Other, 21/05/2026, Katarina Lloyd Jones

There are indications that operating under the Support at Home program is less profitable for providers than the previous Home Care Packages Program, StewartBrown's Dec-25 Home Care/Support at Home Aged Care Financial Performance Survey Sector Report shows. StewartBrown said this would need to be monitored closely.

Similar coverage: [The Weekly Source \(Online\)](#)

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FIVEAA, Mornings, 21/05/2026, Graeme Goodings

Interview with COTA SA chief executive Miranda Starkey about a survey on older Australians' responses to the federal budget. Starkey says the survey reveals strong dissatisfaction among people over 50, with many worried that rising health and cost-of-living pressures will leave them worse off. She says cuts to the private health rebate create concern because older Australians fear longer hospital wait times and losing access to private care.

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DISABILITY AND CARERS

One-third of students disabled

The Australian, Editorials, 22/05/2026, Page 10

The dramatic increase in the number of schoolchildren classified as having a disability is proof again of the perils of lax government oversight when it comes to handing out taxpayers' money. While it may be true that children find it harder to sit still and concentrate in a hyper-stimulated digital world, it is by no means the whole story.

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

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NDIS whistleblower protections 'worst' in Australia

Canberra Times, Other, 21/05/2026, Lucinda Garbutt-Young and Tess Ikonomou

Lawyers have labelled whistleblower laws for the National Disability Insurance Scheme the worst in the country as they urge the Australian government to make changes to protections. The Human Rights Law Centre's Whistleblower Project has called for stronger protections for people calling out misconduct within the scheme, including fraud.

Also reported by: [Illawarra Mercury \(Wollongong\)](#), [Burnie Advocate \(Burnie\)](#), [Ballarat Courier \(Ballarat\)](#), [Warrnambool Standard \(Warrnambool\)](#), [Daily Advertiser \(Wagga Wagga\)](#)

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PRIMARY CARE

No relevant coverage

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POPULATION HEALTH

Risk to juniors warning

Courier Mail, General News, 22/05/2026, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 9

Professional footy players are exposed to a 15-fold increased risk of motor neurone disease, but brain experts warn there is little awareness of how small hits to the head over time can put the athletes at high risk. Following the devastating revelation that NRL star Jai Arrow is in the fight of his life after receiving a shock MND diagnosis, neurophysiologist Adjunct Professor Alan Pearce told The Courier-Mail that the country needed an awareness campaign to give players starting at the junior level all the facts about MND.

Also reported by: [Cairns Post \(Cairns\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#)

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Maternal mortality

Gold Coast Bulletin, General News, 22/05/2026, Page 10

Australia has one of the lowest maternal mortality ratios in the world. In the latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reporting period (2021-2023), Australia's maternal mortality ratio was 6.7 deaths per 100,000 women giving birth.

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Data shows poor health outcomes

Northern Daily Leader, General News, 21/05/2026, Tom Plevey, Page 5

New health data has shown that, again, New England has higher health risks and worse health outcomes than the NSW average. Data from the Primary Health Network of Hunter New England and the Central Coast has shown that New Englanders have more health risk factors, cancer, chronic disease, and worse mental health issues than the state average.

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Terrified for their safety

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 22/05/2026, Michael Nolan, Page 1

Returning home after a weekend away, a mother and her young daughter were sickened to find a used syringe lying inside the yard of their South Toowoomba home. "We were terrified," she said. [...] According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, almost half of those homes were occupied by people living with disability, while a third were seniors.

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Therapy to beat endo pain

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 22/05/2026, Sarah Pye, Page 14

Women living with endometriosis can benefit from therapy-based interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to manage their pain, according to recent findings from the Deakin Lifespan Institute. Pain is one of the most common, and life-altering, symptoms of endometriosis.

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Green whistle for IUDs in GV

Shepparton News, General News, 22/05/2026, Kelly Lucas-Carmody, Page 19

Primary Care Connect in Shepparton has been named among 20 regional Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Hubs to receive free access to the pain relief medication Pentrox, commonly known as the 'green whistle'. The rollout was a promise made by the Victorian Government following the release of Victoria's landmark Inquiry into Women's Pain.

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CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

Striking back at deadliest cancer

The Australian, General News, 22/05/2026, Natasha Robinson, Page 7

It's the devastating brain cancer that strikes kids in the prime of childhood. Upon diagnosis, families have long been told there is little to no hope. Survival is on average less than year and has barely improved in 30 years.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Psychologists' peak body fails its duty on child trans care

The Australian, General News, 22/05/2026, Vanessa Spiller, Page 11

After 24 years of membership, I have left the Australian Psychological Society, Australia's peak professional body for psychologists. The recent release of the APS position statement, "Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of transgender and gender-diverse people", made it impossible for me to continue my membership without compromising my professional integrity and feeling like a financial accessory to the "deception by omission" of psychologists and the general public.

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Calls to better support struggling parents as national survey reveals increasing psychological distress

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Conor Duffy and Rhiannon Hobbins

Almost 60 per cent of Australian parents are experiencing psychological distress with flow on effects to their children, according to the largest-ever national survey of parents. The report's authors said the good news for parents was that some of those problems could be alleviated through participation in community-based peer support programs.

[Read More](#)

3AW, Breakfast, 21/05/2026, Ross Stevenson and Russel Howcroft

Interview with Orygen chief of research and knowledge translation Eóin Killackey about the organisation's world's first collaboration with the WHO. Killackey says the recognition reflects decades of Australian leadership in youth mental health research and practice, including early development of services like Headspace and early psychosis programs.

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IMMUNISATION

Diphtheria cases expose complacency

Canberra Times, Editorials, 22/05/2026, Page 16

The diphtheria outbreak spreading across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, and Queensland has become a matter of national concern. With more than 230 cases recorded, including one fatality, it is reportedly the largest outbreak of the disease since national records began.

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

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Free vaccines and booster calls: NSW reveals 'targeted' approach to diphtheria outbreak as cases hit 35yr high

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park has revealed the state will be taking a "targeted" approach to quell a national rise in diphtheria cases. National cases of the illness have now risen above 220. On Thursday, Mr Park issued a rallying cry for people in the state to ensure they are up to date with their vaccinations.

[Read More](#)

Guild urges diphtheria booster status check

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 21/05/2026, Megan Haggan

The Pharmacy Guild has added its voice to the list of experts calling on Australians to check their diphtheria vaccination status.

[Read More](#)

'I understood why they were confused'

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Other, 21/05/2026

PSA National Vaccination Ambassador Anna Theophilos is calling for vaccination rules across the country to be standardised in accordance with the Australian Immunisation Handbook, after sharing a personal story on social media this week.

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Channel 7, Sunrise, 21/05/2026, Natalie Barr and Matt Shirvington

Interview with AMA president Dr Danielle McMullen about Australia's diphtheria outbreak. McMullen says falling immunisation rates contribute to the country's largest outbreak in decades. She says diphtheria can cause severe respiratory illness, skin infections, and dangerous complications affecting the heart and nervous system.

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Channel 9, Today , 21/05/2026, Karl Stefanovic and Sarah Abo

Interview with infectious diseases expert Dr Nick Coatsworth about Australia's diphtheria outbreak. Coatsworth says the outbreak likely spreads through close living conditions and waning immunity in older children and teenagers, rather than low childhood vaccination rates.

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ABC NewsRadio, Breakfast, 20/05/2026, Sarah Morris

Interview with AMA president Dr Danielle McMullen about Australia's diphtheria outbreak. McMullen links the resurgence to lower vaccination rates, overcrowding, and post-pandemic misinformation, stressing that immunisation remains the strongest protection against the disease. She urges people to check their vaccination status using the Medicare app or Australian Immunisation Register and to speak with a GP about boosters.

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ABC Radio Canberra, Mornings, 21/05/2026, Saskia Mabin

Interview with ACT acting Chief Health Officer Dr Sally Singleton about Australia's diphtheria outbreak. Singleton says ACT health authorities are working with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth on a coordinated response, despite no local cases. She stresses the importance of keeping immunisations up to date as cases spread across northern and central Australia. She says children need routine diphtheria vaccinations plus boosters through adolescence and adulthood.

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WA flu jabs: Optus Stadium AFL vaccine blitz extension through May and June to avoid winter hospital crisis

West Australian, Other, 21/05/2026, Caitlin Vinci

Match-day jabs will continue at AFL games in Perth after the State Government claimed a win with its free flu jabs at the football. But the Government is fighting a battle to meet its own vaccination targets

before the worst of the winter peak hits.

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JEV vax made easier

Shepparton News, General News, 22/05/2026, Page 18

The free Japanese encephalitis vaccine is now available for people aged two months or older who live or work in eligible high-risk local government areas in Victoria after an eligibility review. There are 24 LGAs in Victoria that are currently eligible for the free vaccine.

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HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

No relevant coverage

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HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

Cholesterol code cracker

Herald Sun, General News, 22/05/2026, Sarah Booth, Page 7

A breakthrough gene therapy trial is set to test whether a one-off treatment can protect a patient against having a heart attack years before it occurs. The therapy designed to cut LDL cholesterol by silencing a gene could "significantly change" the approach to cardiovascular disease.

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

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Tool to tackle strokes

Hobart Mercury, General News, 22/05/2026, Elise Kaine, Page 9

Tasmanian researchers have developed a lifesaving research tool to help prevent a leading cause of death and disability – stroke. Professor Seana Gall said one in four people will suffer a stroke in their lifetime, and 90 per cent of those are associated with common risk factors that could be managed with education.

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Hunt is on for viruses to kill 'nasty' bacteria

Kalgoorlie Miner, General News, 22/05/2026, Isabella Davis, Page 3

Bacteria-destroying viruses that naturally occur in the Goldfields will be collected and used to treat antibiotic-resistant infections. The project will be led by Associate Professor Anthony Kicic, who will work alongside local Indigenous communities to search land and water for naturally occurring bacteriophages.

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

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New tech to fight MND

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 22/05/2026, Humaira Saeed, Page 1

Cutting-edge technology used for treating major depressive disorders will be used for research into treating motor neurone disease at Toowoomba Hospital. Toowoomba Hospital neurologist Ehsan Shandiz will test transcranial magnetic stimulation machines to improve the early detection.

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

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Clinical Yarning Project a raging success with 30-workshop milestone, improving communication in community

West Australian, Other, 21/05/2026, Imogen Wilson

A Mid West project focused on improving communication between healthcare professionals and Aboriginal patients is now ready to be rolled out across the State after 30 successful workshops. The Clinical Yarning Project is a locally led initiative and has officially reached the important 30-workshop milestone, delivering to more than 240 healthcare professionals across the Mid West.

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Indigenous health bodies back coordinated response to diphtheria outbreak

National Indigenous Times, Other, 21/05/2026, Dechlan Brennan

The Commonwealth government's funding package in response to the country's largest diphtheria outbreak on record has been welcomed by Indigenous health bodies, who have encouraged everyone to make sure they are fully vaccinated. More than 230 diphtheria cases have been recorded across Australia this year — about 30 times the usual annual average and the largest outbreak since national records began.

[Read More](#)

ABC News, News Breakfast, 21/05/2026, Emma Reballato and James Glenday

Interview with Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy about the federal response to the diphtheria outbreak in remote communities. McCarthy says the government will roll out a support package of more than \$7m, with the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre working alongside Aboriginal community controlled health services and a new coordination group across affected jurisdictions.

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PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

Mixed bill for Tassie health

Hobart Mercury, General News, 22/05/2026, Bridget Clarke, Page 3

Health spending will be cut by \$700m over the next four years, however it has been buoyed by a cash injection from the federal government. The state government will pump \$15bn into health services over four years – amounting to 34 per cent of the state's total budget – with \$3.671bn to be spent next financial year.

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ABC Radio Hobart, Drive, 21/05/2026, Lucy Breden

Interview with AMA Tasmania president Michael Lumsden-Steele about the state budget. He expresses concern over large cuts to health funding. He says current health KPIs already show long waits in emergency departments, elective surgery, and diagnostic results, indicating the system is under strain.

[Play Now](#)

Ambo exec quits post

Herald Sun, General News, 22/05/2026, Shannon Deery, Page 8

A senior Ambulance Victoria executive has quit his post amid ongoing concern within the beleaguered service. Executive director of people and culture, Jesse Maddison, will leave the agency on July 1 after

less than two years in the top job.

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Wait, crisis is all your fault

Herald Sun, General News, 22/05/2026, Shannon Deery, Page 8

Health Minister Harriet Shing has blamed Victoria's population growth for a shocking surge in public surgery waitlists. Data released on Wednesday showed Victoria's surgery waitlist had ballooned by more than 4000 in just three months, prompting warnings of a return to Covid-era levels.

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

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Ill served by an ailing system

Herald Sun, Editorials, 22/05/2026, Page 24

Victoria's health system has long been unwell, but it's getting sicker, not better. The Herald Sun on Thursday revealed that, despite political promises of more money and sharper focus, wait times for elective surgery in the state have blown out further.

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'Get me out of this hellhole': Healthcare workers expose NSW hospitals on the brink

NEWS.com.au, Other, 21/05/2026, Robert White

Patients are waiting for hours in overflowing emergency departments, healthcare workers are burning out under relentless pressure and hospitals are entering winter already stretched beyond capacity in Australia's most populous state. A damning news.com.au investigation which involved speaking to more than a dozen health workers and patients across eight NSW hospitals found a public health system under extraordinary strain, with many warning conditions are now worse than they have ever seen.

[Read More](#)

Hospital war of words

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 22/05/2026, Luke Griffiths, Page 10

The state government's evasiveness over the future of the Torquay community hospital continues, with local MP Richard Riordan accusing Labor of chasing "cheap votes" on the issue. Mr Riordan clashed with Health Minister Harriet Shing on Thursday during a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing as he sought clarity on whether plans for the hospital had been abandoned.

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Nurses 'forced' to use human shields

Launceston Examiner, General News, 22/05/2026, Bailey Forbes, Page 2

Nurses are being told to stand behind their better-equipped counterparts during X-rays due to ill-fitting protective equipment, a union has said. Australian Nurses and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian (ANMF) branch secretary Emily Shepherd said the union was hearing reports that nurses were being forced to use human shields during tasks involving radiation imagery.

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Why the state rejected \$2 hospital offer

Newcastle Herald, General News, 22/05/2026, Damon Cronshaw, Page 3

NSW Health has revealed that legal liabilities are a key reason why it rejected a \$2 offer to buy the private arm of the Calvary Mater Newcastle. The disclosure comes amid concerns that this private arm - run by Sydney company Novacare Health - will soon be placed in voluntary administration.

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Boy's finger ripped off at Cattery

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 22/05/2026, Lincoln Holmes, Page 1

A six-year-old Geelong boy's finger was ripped off outside the Kardinia Park sports precinct just 2km from a hospital with his family claiming they were told they would need to wait more than an hour for an ambulance. James' finger was torn off when it became stuck in a fence as he watched a local footy game last Saturday.

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

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

Ambulance upgrade showcased

Border Watch, General News, 22/05/2026, Charlotte Varcoe, Page 6

The new Minister for Health Blair Boyer attended a short tour of upgraded medical facilities during the recent Country Cabinet. Mr Boyer attended the new Flinders University build which will double the number of medical students before touring the upgrades at the Mount Gambier and Districts Hospital.

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

New tech helping dialysis patients

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 22/05/2026, Page 11

Townsville University Hospital dialysis patients will spend less time in hospital and more time at home under a research-funded tech boost aimed at slashing treatment wait times. Regional tele-trial funding has delivered a new portable SonoSite ultrasound machine to the hospital's renal dialysis unit, allowing clinicians to monitor patients and map out lifesaving treatment in real time.

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This is what the new Shellharbour Hospital will look like inside

Illawarra Mercury, Other, 21/05/2026, Natalie Croxon

Illawarra residents are getting their first look inside the future Shellharbour Hospital with the release of a new animation. The hospital is on Dunmore Road, with the main building structure well under way and work on the multistorey car park now happening.

[Read More](#)

ABC Radio Perth, Statewide Mornings, 21/05/2026, Nadia Mitsopoulos

Interview with Perth Children's Hospital paediatrician Dr Stephen Oo about long paediatric wait times in WA. Oo says two-year waits delay diagnoses, therapy, school support and early intervention for children with developmental issues, while also placing major emotional and financial strain on families. He says governments need long-term planning, more training positions, better staff retention and stronger telehealth support to improve care.

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

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

No relevant coverage

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Junior doctors accuse hospital of veiled threat

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 22/05/2026, Kate Aubusson, Page 2

Junior doctors at a Sydney hospital are furious after receiving a memo from their bosses that they characterise as a thinly veiled threat to their careers, and the suggestion that they're not tough enough to work in the state's healthcare system. The letter, sent by Nepean Hospital's administration to junior medical officers last week, is emblematic of the ongoing tension expressed in all caps between NSW's

public hospitals' attempts to adequately staff increasingly busy emergency departments and inpatient units, and overworked junior doctors who are expected to do unpaid overtime.

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

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Canberra hospital doctors to stop work

Canberra Times, General News, 22/05/2026, Lanie Tindale, Page 2

Canberra public hospital doctors will take industrial action over a pay dispute, including stopping work for 15 minutes next week. Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation members voted to take a "series of bans and stoppages" that the union said will not endanger patients.

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

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Hospital staff strike looms

Herald Sun, General News, 22/05/2026, Sarah Booth, Page 8

Critical public hospital staff are preparing to go on strike next month after wage negotiations stalled, in the latest industrial dispute facing the Allan government. Allied healthcare workers – including radiographers, physiotherapists and radiation therapists – across the state's major metropolitan and regional hospitals have voted in favour of industrial action.

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

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Birth choices dwindle as new laws push Geraldton's last private midwife to press pause in WA

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Brianna Melville

The last privately practising midwife offering homebirths north of Perth in Western Australia is preparing to pause practising indefinitely when new legislation comes into effect next year. Cath Tan runs a practise in Geraldton, about 420 kilometres north of Perth, a city with a population of more than 40,000 people.

[Read More](#)

Emptying the bins? What nurses want — and definitely don't want

Australian Doctor, Other, 21/05/2026, Paul Smith

Primary care nurses want to spend less time emptying bins, photocopying, cleaning surfaces and doing data entry — and more time suturing, managing asthma, conducting health assessments and training colleagues. The findings of a new workforce survey suggest many nurses feel they are being held back from more complex clinical work, with a third saying they are not being stretched to their full clinical abilities.

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

No relevant coverage

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

New standards framework for digital health

Aged Care Insite, Other, 21/05/2026, Stefanie Schultz

Australia has taken a step toward a safer and more connected digital health system with the release of the National Framework for Digital Health Standards, a blueprint designed to bring consistency, clinical

safety and interoperability to the technologies that now underpin modern healthcare. [...] The Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) said the framework will help end the longstanding problem of fragmented standards developed in isolation.

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

A simple tooth fix emptied Natasha's super and left her in constant pain

Age, General News, 22/05/2026, Henrietta Cook, Page 4

When Natasha Tualau walked into a clinic owned by one of Australia's largest cosmetic dental chains, she claims she was looking for a simple fix for a discoloured front tooth. [...] Her treatment at the clinic by four Dental Boutique dentists, as well as an external GP and psychiatrist, is now being investigated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

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

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Doctor on sex charges kept on a tight leash

Daily Telegraph, General News, 22/05/2026, Eliza Barr, Page 10

A Sydney doctor accused of sexually abusing female patients over nearly 40 years has been spotted out and about in an exclusive harbourside suburb. General practitioner Andrew Small, 70, was seen walking a dog near his home in Bellevue Hill on Wednesday, days after being charged with three counts of aggravated sexual assault, one of aggravated indecent assault and one of sexual intercourse without consent, following a police investigation into his alleged conduct dating back to 1988.

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A doctor is accused of rape. We can't name him

Herald Sun, General News, 22/05/2026, Laura Placella and Sarah Booth, Page 4

A doctor has been accused of repeatedly raping a woman in his home in a "brutal" attack she says left her with bruises. The Herald Sun can reveal the serious allegations against the doctor, but not his identity, after he became the latest accused criminal to win a gag order on mental health grounds.

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

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Midwife wins appeal to work unsupervised after baby's tragic death

NEWS.com.au, Other, 21/05/2026, Kate Stephenson

A midwife who allegedly did not recommended hospital care before a baby's tragic death has successfully overturned her strict supervision conditions. Queensland midwife Sasha Leigh Hopkins appeared before the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal last month to seek the end of immediate action taken against her by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia in the wake of the baby's death.

[Read More](#)

Suspended doctor accused of sexual assault faces medical company collapse

The Courier Mail, Other, 21/05/2026, Jessica Elder

A suspended Brisbane doctor accused of sexual assault now faces the collapse of his medical company that ran two urgent care clinics, after a creditor moved to have it wound up in court. Liquidators were appointed to Dr Dushyant Singh Pty Ltd after a single plaintiff, Amy Louise Johnston, applied to wind up the company on April 7.

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Doctor who blamed Shane Warne's death on vaccines - while handing

out 189 fake Covid exemptions - is banned for five years: 'Career destroyed'

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 21/05/2026, Ian Vickers

A Victorian doctor who handed out Covid vaccination exemptions for nearly 200 patients without examining a single one has been banned from medicine for at least five years. Dr Denes Borsos issued 189 job exemptions and 122 face mask exemptions in just three days during the pandemic - without conducting a single proper clinical assessment.

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Queensland's banned doctors, nurses and medics: The full list revealed

The Courier Mail, Other, 21/05/2026

Health practitioners need to be trusted but even they can make bad decisions. From nurses to doctors to pharmacists, here is the full list of medicos who had their practising rights cancelled or restricted in Queensland since 2025, according to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

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AUSTRALIAN CDC

Highly contagious diphtheria strain spreads through remote parts of NT, SA and WA

NEWS.com.au, Other, 21/05/2026, Jack Nivison

The outbreak of a little-known disease called diphtheria in the Top End of the country has Aussies asking lots of questions about the illness, how it spreads, where it is most likely to pop up and what federal, state and territory governments are doing to keep it contained. [...] Symptoms of skin-based diphtheria include "skin ulcers with a bluish appearance" that tend to appear on the arms and legs, according to the Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC).

[Read More](#)

Australia's diphtheria outbreak: why it's not all about vaccination

The Australian, Other, 21/05/2026, Natasha Robinson

Diphtheria, once virtually eradicated, is spreading like a bushfire across remote Australia. Vaccination hesitancy is not the sole reason.

[Read More](#)

Why diphtheria, whooping cough and measles have come back in Australia

The Conversation, Other, 21/05/2026, Adrian Esterman

Diphtheria was once one of Australia's most feared childhood infections, killing thousands of children before vaccines were available. Then for decades, it became so rare most doctors never saw a case. That has now changed.

[Read More](#)

WHO-linked report warns world more at risk of pandemic now than before COVID

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Audrey Courty

The world is more at risk of a pandemic and less safe from deadly virus outbreaks than it was before COVID, a major pandemic preparedness report has found. The findings from the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) come as health authorities around the world scramble to contain outbreaks of the life-threatening Ebola and hantavirus, while Australia responds to one of its worst diphtheria outbreaks since records began.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Sport Integrity Australia to widen drug-testing amid illicit peptides boom

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Fiona Willan

The nation's anti-doping agency has revealed that it plans to expand drug-testing in Australian sport in response to the soaring popularity of unregulated peptides in the broader community. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has recently observed a significant increase in the promotion and use of unapproved peptide products, including injectable formulations, marketed for purposes such as anti-ageing, bodybuilding, tanning and weight loss.

Also reported by: [ABC 7:30](#)

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GLP-1 receptor agonists can improve HFpEF symptoms in patients with obesity, Heart Foundation tells doctors

Australian Doctor, Other, 21/05/2026, Jamie Thannoo

The Heart Foundation has cautiously backed semaglutide and tirzepatide as options for patients with obesity and heart failure with preserved ejection fraction, in its first consensus statement on weight management and CVD. Published on Monday, the statement targets what it calls the umbrella "cardiovascular-kidney-metabolic" syndrome, and guides ways of treating obesity and cardiovascular disease as linked chronic conditions.

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OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

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FOOD STANDARDS

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AICIS

School in mouse-infested WA town closed after toxic bait spread on grounds

ABC Online, Other, 21/05/2026, Joanna Prendergast and Chris Lewis

The Western Australian College of Agriculture at Morawa has been closed and students sent home until further notice after a toxic mouse bait only approved for grain paddocks was spread on its campus. A severe mouse plague has overwhelmed Morawa, 370 kilometres north of Perth, with rodents invading homes, businesses and paddocks in this Wheatbelt town.

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