

Monday, 5th October 2026

Minister Butler | Minister McAllister | Minister Rae | Assistant Minister McBride | Assistant Minister White | Special Envoy Repacholi | Department | Ageing and Aged Care | Disability and Carers | Primary Care | Population Health | Chronic Conditions and Screening | Mental Health and Suicide Prevention | Immunisation | Health Systems Strategies | Health Economics & Research | First Nations Health | Public Hospital and Health Reform | Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office | Health Workforce | Technology Assessment and Access | Medicare Benefits and Digital Health | Benefits Integrity | Australian CDC | Therapeutic Goods Administration | Office of Drug Control | Food Standards | AICIS

LINKS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **The Australian** (page 2) reports that mental health experts are calling for Health Minister Mark Butler to reveal the next stage of NDIS reform, amid concerns that progress has stalled on foundational supports for psychosocial disability.
- **ABC Online** reports that public health organisation Quit is calling for stronger action on illegal tobacco advertising on social media platforms. A spokesperson from the Department of Health said the Australian government took all allegations of non-compliance with tobacco advertising standards seriously.
- **The Herald Sun** (page 1) reports that projected deficits at Victorian hospitals have prompted questions about the adequacy of state funding for health services.
- **The Townsville Bulletin** (page 1) reports that Queensland's state opposition has called for fast-tracking of upgrades to Townsville University Hospital amid high levels of ambulance ramping and long specialist waitlists.
- **The Age** (page 3) reports that Victoria's state opposition has announced an election pledge to introduce a "transit lounge" scheme to ease ambulance ramping. *Also reported by*: *Herald Sun*
- **The Northern Territory News** (page 3) reports that an NT health clinic in Alpurrurulam has been closed, with no definitive reopening date, after nurses were threatened during an outbreak

of alcohol-fuelled violence.

- **The West Australian** (page 5) reports that WA researchers are developing a world-first blood test for the rapid detection of neonatal sepsis, which could be introduced to hospitals within two years.
- **The Canberra Times** (online) reports that researchers from the CSIRO and Adelaide University have been awarded a Medical Research Future Fund grant to develop and test "smart" wound dressings made of synthetic honeybee silk.
- **NEWS.com.au** (online) reports that the TGA is consulting on two proposals to tighten restrictions on non-therapeutic nitrous oxide under the Poisons Standard, as campaigners and community members highlight a rise in the abuse of industrial-sized nitrous oxide tanks.

MINISTER BUTLER

'Give us answers' on NDIS reforms

The Australian, General News, 05/10/2026, Sarah Ison, Page 2

Health Minister Mark Butler must immediately unveil the next tranche of NDIS reform focusing on mental illness, experts say, demanding Labor follow through on a promise to make psychosocial disability "the next cab off the rank" in its work to improve the $60bn scheme. Pressure ramped up last week as Labor's signature policy to divert autistic children off the NDIS Thriving Kids officially kicked off, prompting calls on governments to "turn their attention to the next critical piece of reform".

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Over 65s 'expensive target' in health insurance debate

HealthTimes, General News, 04/10/2026

Hundreds of older Australians will forgo comfort or specialist healthcare to offset rising insurance costs, which they feel duty-bound to maintain, an expert has warned. [...] But federal Health Minister Mark Butler was firm on his policy following a meeting with his state counterparts on Friday, accusing them of believing modelling from the health insurance industry.

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Dollars pour in for Dusty's fundraiser, and rural kids will benefit

dubbophotonews.com.au, General News, 04/10/2026, Sharon Bonthuys

When he finally met with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Canberra on Tuesday, September 15, after completing a gruelling 16-day, 540km trek on foot from Warren in central NSW, 12 year old Dusty Langby had raised a whopping $1000 for ever kilometre he and his support team had walked. [...] In a joint statement issued with federal Health Minister Mark Butler, Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health Emma McBride, and NSW Senator Deborah O'Neill, the Prime Minister announced the funding on September 15 as the group welcomed Dusty to Parliament House after his remarkable journey.

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MINISTER MCALLISTER

NITV, NITV News, 04/10/2026, Cameron Gooley

The Federal Government is promising a stronger and safer NDIS system to protect First Nations clients in remote communities. NDIS Minister Jenny McAllister says new safeguards will target operators accused of exploiting the scheme by overcharging clients and offering incentives.

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MINISTER RAE

People with multiple sclerosis face uncertainty after MSWA cuts home care program

ABC Online, General News, 04/10/2026

Marlene Robinson has been living with the degenerative neurological condition multiple sclerosis for 30 years, with no movement in her legs and limited use of her arms. [...] Aged Care Minister Sam Rae's spokesperson said the government's aged care reforms were delivering "stronger provider accountability and enhanced system oversight to support safe, high-quality care".

Also reported by: MSN Australia (Online)

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News24, The Jaimee Rogers Show, 04/10/2026, Jaimee Rogers

Interview with Shadow Health and Aged Care Minister Anne Ruston. Rogers says a Daily Telegraph investigation has exposed price gouging in aged care, and she wonders when Aged Care Minister Sam Rae will acknowledge the ongoing issues. Ruston says Rae is not prepared to stand up and accept responsibility for the failings in his portfolio, and they have also seen him completely refuse to accept the fact that his computer-generated algorithm, which determines people's care needs and has no human override, is fundamentally flawed.

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ABC News, Weekend Breakfast, 04/10/2026, Fauziah Ibrahim and Johanna Nicholson

MSWA, a nonprofit organisation, will stop providing a Commonwealth-funded home care program for older people because government changes will increase costs and administrative burdens, leaving 76 people living with multiple sclerosis across Western Australia facing a shortfall in care for their basic needs. Aged Care Minister Sam Rae's spokesperson says they're monitoring Support at Home to ensure people get the care they need at reasonable prices.

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

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ASSISTANT MINISTER WHITE

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SPECIAL ENVOY REPACHOLI

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DEPARTMENT

Illegal tobacco advertisements avoiding detection on social media, Quit says

ABC Online, General News, 04/10/2026, Charlotte Wilkes

Public health organisation Quit says the federal government is barely scratching the surface in its battle against illegal tobacco advertising on social media. [...] A Department of Health, Disability and Ageing spokesperson said all alleged breaches of non-compliance were taken seriously.

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Rising number of retirees

Gold Coast Bulletin, General News, 05/10/2026, Rosie Gale, Page 4

The Gold Coast's peak primary healthcare body is preparing the region's health system for a looming surge in older residents, with the over-65 population set to almost double within 20 years. According to the latest Census data, there were about 111,000 Gold Coast residents aged 65 and over 17.7 per cent of the city's population, a higher proportion than both Queensland (17 per cent) and the national average (17.2 per cent).

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Red flag for care contracts

West Australian, Business News, 05/10/2026, Nick Bruining, Page 27

Thousands of aged-care residents have started to receive new contracts and letters in some cases implying additional payments are mandatory. Specialist aged-care advisers are warning consumers not to sign anything until they fully understand their rights and obligations.

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DISABILITY AND CARERS

2GB, Weekends, 04/10/2026, Luke Grant

Interview with Beltara Care CEO David Gunter. Gunter says Beltara Care specialises in working with NDIS participants with psychosocial disabilities or mental health issues, such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, and he also adds that a big part of his role is trying to manage the anxiety that's coming along with the uncertainties and budgetary cuts around the NDIS. He states that they need both state and federal governments to recognise that many NDIS participants also have nowhere to live while providers are fleecing the scheme.

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PRIMARY CARE

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POPULATION HEALTH

Wellness warriors push nicotine as a miracle drug

Australian Financial Review, General News, 05/10/2026, Hasmeena Kathuria, Page 36

Across social media, podcasts, wellness communities and tech start-ups, prominent wellness personalities and other influencers are portraying nicotine as a misunderstood compound.

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Queensland leads war on tobacco gangs

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 05/10/2026, Rob Harris, Page 8

The federal government has thrown down a challenge to state premiers over the rampant illicit tobacco trade, dangling fresh cash and pointing to Queensland's dramatic crackdown as a blueprint for the rest of the country. Spurred by new data showing legal tobacco sales surged 55 per cent following a tough state enforcement blitz, Canberra is injecting an extra $2.7 million into Queensland's model a move designed as a sharp contrast to NSW and Victoria, where firebombings and gang violence linked to blackmarket cigarettes are escalating.

Also reported by: Age (Melbourne)

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Legal ciggie sales soar

Courier Mail, General News, 05/10/2026, Patrick Billings, Page 10

The Queensland LNP government's crackdown on illicit tobacco dealers is working, according to federal Labor. In a 10-day blitz last November 148 black market tobacco stores across Queensland were hit with three-month closure orders, and more than 11.8 million cigarettes, 1.7 tonnes of loose tobacco, 87,000 vapes, 4.2 litres of vaping liquid and 270,000 nicotine pouches were seized.

Also reported by: Daily Telegraph Australia (Online), Adelaide Now (Online), The Courier Mail (Online), The Mercury (Online), Northern Territory News (Online), Toowoomba Chronicle (Online), Townsville Bulletin (Online)

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Tasmania's new ice age

Hobart Mercury, General News, 05/10/2026, Nick Clark, Page 1

Kilograms of cocaine, ice and Liquid G are flowing into Tasmania at an unprecedented rate, prompting a 32 per cent surge in drug trafficking charges by police. Tasmania Police Detective-Inspector Stuart Greenwood said Tasmanian investigators, and the Tasmania Joint Organised Crime Task Force comprising Tasmania Police, Australian Border Force, Australian Federal Police and other commonwealth agencies was identifying larger volumes of illicit drugs coming into the state.

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As doomed to failure as the war on drugs

Hobart Mercury, General News, 05/10/2026, Greg Barns, Page 18

Around Australia, police and politicians are threatening to close down illicit tobacco shops, disrupt supply chains and come down hard on participants in this highly lucrative trade. [...] The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports; "Adjusting for seasonality and increasing prices of tobacco products (so that all prices are expressed in current-day terms), the estimated amount that Australians spent on tobacco declined from $77bn in 1990; to $55bn in 2000 and $15bn in 2024 (Bayly and Scollo 2025)."

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Sign Australia risks American-style homelessness crisis as city tents increase: 'Blew me away'

Yahoo! News Australia, General News, 04/10/2026, Preston Potts

A Sydney charity boss says parts of the city are increasingly resembling Los Angeles as tents spread and workers struggle to afford basic essentials. [...] The latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures show 16 per cent of people seeking homelessness assistance were employed in 2024–25, up from 13 per cent in 2018–19.

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CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

Call for MND case register

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 05/10/2026, Evangeline Polymeneas, Page 15

South Australia's peak motor neurone disease charity is calling on the state government to introduce compulsory reporting of cases. This comes after NSW declared MND a notifiable disease, making it compulsory for diagnosing doctors and hospitals to report every new case to public health authorities.

Also reported by: Daily Telegraph Australia (Online), Adelaide Now (Online), The Courier Mail (Online), The Mercury (Online), Northern Territory News (Online), Toowoomba Chronicle (Online)

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Tracking MND is vital to find a cure

Adelaide Advertiser, Editorials, 05/10/2026, Page 20

Motor neurone disease is a ruthless, terminal illness, and every piece of data brings researchers closer to understanding its causes and finding a cure. MND South Australia's call to make the condition a "notifiable disease", as it is in NSW, is a sensible, practical step that our state government should adopt without delay.

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Wake-up call on cancer

Cairns Post, General News, 05/10/2026, Page 6

More than half the nation dangerously underestimates breast cancer, new figures show. Research released by the National Breast Cancer Foundation states over half of Australians didn't realise 56 people were diagnosed with the cancer every day, and around 84 per cent of Australians underestimated the likelihood of the disease returning and spreading.

Also reported by: Townsville Bulletin (Townsville)

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Keep the conversation going on dementia to make a difference and challenge stigma

Hobart Mercury, General News, 05/10/2026, Laura Eaton, Page 18

Now that Dementia Action Week has concluded, the challenge before us is to ensure the conversation does not end as well. While awareness campaigns may be short, the impact of dementia is lifelong, affecting not only those diagnosed but everyone who loves and supports them.

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Why viral sleepmaxxing hacks like mouth taping can worsen insomnia

The Australian, General News, 04/10/2026, Sara Winter

From mouth taping and viral drinks dubbed “sleepy girl mocktails” to obsessively tracking every restless minute, social media promises that the right routine can deliver perfect sleep. But some popular practices are ineffective, risky or can make insomnia worse.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Moura health advocates at breaking point, as rural town loses its only GP

ABC Online, General News, 04/10/2026, Jacob Gamble

Marie Cherry is battling incurable breast cancer, and soon there might not be any doctor in town to treat her. The 82-year-old has been living in Moura, on Queensland's coal belt, for more than 50 years, and said moving away was not an option.

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IMMUNISATION

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HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

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HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

Buying valuable time

West Australian, General News, 05/10/2026, Bethany Hiatt, Page 5

Testing newborns for sepsis will be faster and more accurate under a world-first blood test being developed in WA that could save the lives of thousands of babies every year. Neonatal sepsis is a serious infection that can kill babies or cause lifelong disabilities if not picked up quickly.

Also reported by: West Australian (Online)

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Synthetic bee silk set to take sting out of wounds

Canberra Times, General News, 04/10/2026, Lloyd Jones

Australian scientists are looking to turn synthetic honeybee silk into "smart" dressings to prevent and combat wound infections. Researchers from the CSIRO and Adelaide University have found that the silk is safe, well tolerated and biodegradable during wound healing in mice.

Also reported by: Daily Liberal (Dubbo), Central Western Daily (Orange), Western Advocate (Bathurst) and widely syndicated across regional outlets.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Australia hits global HIV target as diagnoses fall but First Nations gap remains

7News.com.au, General News, 04/10/2026, Lauren Thomson

Australia has reached a major milestone in its decades-long fight against HIV, with diagnoses falling by a quarter over the past decade. The nation is also achieving ambitious global testing and treatment targets for the first time.

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PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

Wilson's $99m hospital pledge to ease ramping

Age, General News, 05/10/2026, Angelica Snowden, Page 3

Hospital overcrowding and ambulance ramping would be eased by a "transit lounge" scheme to shift patients out of emergency department beds sooner, the state opposition said in its latest election pledge. According to the $99 million plan, 10 new or expanded lounges would be reserved for patients who are ready to leave hospital but are awaiting medication or transport, Opposition Leader Jess Wilson said.

Also reported by: *Sydney Morning Herald (Online)*

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Critical debt threat

Herald Sun, General News, 05/10/2026, Shannon Deery, Page 1

Victoria's health system is at breaking point with hospitals racking up hundreds of millions of dollars in deficits, hindering their ability to meet soaring demand. Senior health sources have told the Herald Sun that budget blowouts and growing financial pressure at the state's major hospitals have heaped unprecedented strain on the system which is already struggling with ambulance ramping, growing elective surgery wait times and hospital access.

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Coalition pledges hospital 'transit lounges' to speed up care

Herald Sun, General News, 05/10/2026, Brendan Kearns, Page 5

Up to 10 "transit lounges" would be set up at Victorian hospitals to get patients out of emergency rooms faster, under an election commitment from the Coalition. According to recent research from Ambulance Victoria's Centre for Research and Evaluation the number of ambulance hours lost to ramping between January 2020 and March 2024 was equivalent to an 96 10-hour ambulance shifts every day.

Also reported by: *Geelong Advertiser (Geelong)*

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Waiting games

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 05/10/2026, Emma Cam, Page 1

Ambulance ramping and specialist waitlists at Townsville University Hospital remain high, with the latest figures prompting fresh calls from opposition leaders for the hospital expansion to be fast-tracked. However, the state government said the opposition had "no credibility whatsoever" and they have been left to "pick up the pieces".

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LNP cuts prison health plan

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 05/10/2026, Samuel Davis, Page 4

Startling new data has revealed the poor health of regional Queensland's youth prisoners, who will receive significantly less medical care after a key program was discontinued by the state government. Under non-recurrent funding provided in the 2024-25 and 2025-26 state budgets, juvenile detainees at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in North Queensland received a comprehensive health assessment in their first week of admission.

Also reported by: *Cairns Post (Cairns)*

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Time to act

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 05/10/2026, Page 18

Fresh stories from patients at Townsville University Hospital who were made to wait for hours while undergoing health complications have sparked a new row over who is to blame for the current crisis. While the political fingerpointing is understandable, it is far from helpful.

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Long-awaited outback hospital reaches practical completion amid another cost blowout

ABC Online, General News, 04/10/2026, Jarrod Lucas

WA's Health Minister Meredith Hammat has defended the cost of a new eight-bed outback hospital, which has reached practical completion at a cost of $67.6 million, or more than three times the original budget from 2015. Construction of the new Laverton Hospital began last year to replace the aging facility, which was built in 1973 for the northern Goldfields community, about 950 kilometres north-east of Perth.

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Victorian Liberals promise to slash surgery wait times while Labor vows to scrap land tax changes

ABC Online, General News, 04/10/2026

The Coalition has promised to halve Victoria's waitlist for elective surgery if victorious in the upcoming state election. The state's elective surgery waitlist has continued to climb over the past year, with about 68,730 Victorian patients across urgent and non-urgent categories still waiting for a procedure in June.

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Nurses fleeing NT town

Northern Territory News, General News, 05/10/2026, Camden Smith, Page 3

The Alpurrurulam health clinic was closed on Sunday afternoon and it's understood police reinforcements were called in from Queensland after violence broke-out at the remote eastern Territory community. Sources from Alpurrurulam, about 20km from the Queensland border, said three Queensland police officers had flown into town with the Royal Flying Doctor Service after alcohol-fuelled violence broke out.

Also reported by: Daily Telegraph Australia (Online), Adelaide Now (Online), The Courier Mail (Online), Cairns Post (Online), Gold Coast Bulletin (Online), Northern Territory News (Online), Townsville Bulletin (Online)

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Ambos spray plan canned

Northern Territory News, General News, 05/10/2026, Gera Kazakov, Page 7

Arming ambos with OC spray to protect themselves has been turfed by the union, who say frontline paramedics hold "serious concerns" about it. United Workers Union secretary Erina Early said while frontline paramedics wanted safer workplace, "OC spray and body-worn cameras are not the answer".

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Doctor fatigue can be perilous to our patients

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 05/10/2026, Travis Lines, Page 27

The shrieking of the alarm pierces my sleep. Five hours.

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Junior doctors, health workers walk out

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 05/10/2026, William Stanley, Page 2

Standing in the rain, south-west doctors joined their colleagues around the state and stopped work to demand better working conditions and pay. On Thursday, October 1, more than 10 junior doctors gathered outside of Warrnambool's South West Healthcare undertaking protected industrial action.

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

Raft of amendments blow out major IT Tax Office contract

Canberra Times, General News, 05/10/2026, Ray Athwal, Page 8

It is a familiar pattern across the public service where an agency signs a major technology deal, only to quietly pour millions into the agreement through post-award variations to keep critical systems running. [...] Despite scathing audits exposing probity breaches and weak procurement planning, the Tax Office and the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) continue to rely on continual extensions to sustain multibillion-dollar dependencies on incumbent vendors.

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

Mental health nurse Mark Leach suspended after ‘grooming' vulnerable patients and allegedly engaging in sex acts with them

Adelaide Now, General News, 04/10/2026, Lucy Rutherford

A mental health nurse has been slammed for grooming highly vulnerable patients, including paying one $500 after a sex act, a tribunal has found. In a judgment published online, the SA Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) found Mark Christian Leach's actions constituted both professional misconduct and unprofessional conduct.

Also reported by: Daily Telegraph Australia (Online), The Courier Mail (Online), The Mercury (Online), Northern Territory News (Online), Toowoomba Chronicle (Online), Townsville Bulletin (Online)

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AUSTRALIAN CDC

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Dangerous midnight act leaving a toxic mess on Australian streets

NEWS.com.au, General News, 04/10/2026, Rebecca Borg

It’s just after midnight on a quiet Melbourne street. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is currently consulting on two proposals to further restrict non-therapeutic nitrous oxide under the Poisons Standard, with submissions open until October 12.

Also reported by: Daily Telegraph Australia (Online), Adelaide Now (Online), The Courier Mail (Online), The Mercury (Online), Northern Territory News (Online), Toowoomba Chronicle (Online), Townsville Bulletin (Online)

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