

Tuesday, 20th 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 4)** reports the Federal Government's proposed cuts to private health insurance rebates for Australians over 65 would impact 500,000 part-rate pensioners and 700,000 full-rate pensioners, as Health Minister Mark Butler considers whether to exempt some or all pensioners. Council on the Ageing and National Seniors Australia opposed the bill regardless of any exemptions, saying the changes would be "short-sighted".
- **The Herald Sun (page 4)** reports that more than 1.1 million calls were made to 1800MEDICARE in its first 10 months of operation, with more than 170,000 callers diverted from emergency departments or calling triple-0, and at least 53,000 referred to Urgent Care Services. Health Minister Mark Butler said the free, 24/7 service gives Australians access to expert health advice regardless of location or time. *Also reported by: Health Services Daily*
- **The Guardian** reports that Senator Jacqui Lambie has condemned a cartoon produced by Pauline Hanson's One Nation party which mocked her ongoing experience of living with vaginal prolapse. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese praised Senator Lambie for her courage in speaking out about the condition which affects about 3-8% of women.
- **The Daily Telegraph (page 7)** reports that *r*esearch from the University of Sydney is linking consuming sugar to the later emergence of depression and anxiety. The researchers also found that eating one additional serving of any type of fruit each day was associated with a 13% lower risk of depression.

- **The Daily Telegraph (page 10)** reports that NSW Health Minister Ryan Park has issued a warning over the use of peptides following a major surge in emergency department admissions. “I’m urging the community to be mindful of the long-term harms of unprescribed peptides and speak with their GP for safe, evidence-based health advice,” Minister Park said. *Also reported by: Canberra Times, ABC Online*

MINISTER BUTLER

Labor hits 500,000 seniors on part pension

The Australian, Edition Changes - All-round Metro, 20/10/2026, Rosie Lewis, Page 4

Labor has revealed 500,000 partrate age pensioners will have to pay more for their private health insurance under its crackdown on rebates for over-65s, as Health Minister Mark Butler considers whether to exempt all pensioners from the changes or only those on the full rate. Confirmation that half a million part-rate pensioners would be affected, as well as 700,000 fullrate pensioners, comes as the peak body for health funds demanded the Albanese government find "fairer" alternative savings to the $3bn private health insurance rebate cut for over-65s, which Labor wants to use to fund aged care beds and services.

Also reported by: The Australian (Australia), The Australian (Online)

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Insurance rebate cut to hit seniors, public hospitals

The Australian, Editorials, 20/10/2026, Page 10

Labor's planned cut to the private health insurance rebate for seniors will have harmful consequences for Australians over 65 and for the overcrowded public hospital system. [...] Analysis from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing shows the widely claimed government figure that only 44 4,000 Australians would dump private health insurance under the policy in 2028-29 would blow out to 78, ,000 just a year later.

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Medicare callers left on hold line

Herald Sun, General News, 20/10/2026, Jade Gailberger, Page 4

One in 10 callers to 1800MEDICARE was diverted from presenting to an emergency department or calling triple-0, new figures reveal. More than 1.1 million calls have been made to the free health service during its first 10 months of operation. [...] "1800MEDICARE has already had a significant impact on state and territory hospitals, with more than 170,000 people diverted from busy emergency departments or from calling triple-0," Health Minister Mark Butler said.

Also reported by: Courier Mail (Brisbane), Adelaide Advertiser (Adelaide), Hobart Mercury (Hobart), Geelong Advertiser (Geelong), Adelaide Now (Online), Gold Coast Bulletin (Online), Toowoomba Chronicle (Online), Herald Sun (Online), Northern Territory News (Online), Townsville Bulletin (Online), The Mercury (Online), Geelong Advertiser (Online), The Courier Mail (Online), Daily Telegraph Australia (Online), Cairns Post (Online), Weekly Times Now (Online)

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Dust gets it done

Take 5, General News, 26/10/2026, Page 52

Stepping in my front door, I let out an exhausted sigh. [...] So, we found a wheelchair and pushed him into Parliament House where we met with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Minister for Health, Mark Butler.

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Anti-Poverty Week wrapped up with action call in Port Adelaide

Alive 90.5 FM, General News, 19/10/2026

Saturday, October 17, marks the end of Anti-Poverty Week, which raises awareness of poverty and how to address it. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that people receiving welfare payments have a mortality rate nine times higher than other Australians. The figures are among the

concerns driving advocates to protest outside Federal Health Minister Mark Butler's office in Port Adelaide last Friday.

Also reported by: *Radio 4EB (Online)*

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1800MEDICARE claims 170,000 diversions from emergency care

Health Services Daily, General News, 20/10/2026

New data given to News Corp mastheads by federal health minister Mark Butler shows more than 1.1 million calls to the national health advice service since 1 January, although the methodology used to calculate avoided ED presentations remains unclear. In a rare piece of good news for the federal health minister, Mark Butler says the 1800MEDICARE service has prevented more than 170,000 potential emergency department presentations or calls to triple zero in its first 10 months of operation.

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HCF: mental health claims pushing gold cover to breaking point

Insurance Business Australia, General News, 19/10/2026, Stephen Owens

HCF chief Lorraine Thomas says the cost of inpatient psychiatric care is pricing members out of top-tier cover, as a new white paper warns 1.2 million Australians could trade down within a decade. [...] Health minister Mark Butler put the identical bill back before parliament the next morning, so funds are lodging 2027 prices without knowing whether it will pass.

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MIX 104.9, 360, 19/10/2026, Katie Woolf

Interview with Council on the Ageing NT Chair Janette Jewell. Woolf says COTA NT is urging Federal Health Minister Mark Butler and the Federal Government to reconsider proposed cuts to the private health insurance rebate after the Senate blocked the changes. Jewell says Butler intends to reintroduce the bill in the Senate, but she is hoping that it will be blocked again because the changes will make it harder for struggling older Australians.

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MINISTER MCALLISTER

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MINISTER RAE

Catholic sector welcomes change to accommodation payment

CathNews, General News, 19/10/2026, Rebecca Comini

The Albanese Government's decision to let aged care residents pay for their accommodation by lump sum while their means assessment is finalised is a sensible and welcome change that reduces complexity for residents, families and services, Catholic Health Australia said. [...] "We thank the Government and the Minister for Aged Care and Seniors, Sam Rae, for their considered engagement and for adopting this solution."

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ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

McBride's Mitchell meetings

North Central Review, General News, 20/10/2026

Federal Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Emma McBride was in Wallan on Friday, visiting key mental health advocate groups during Mental Health Month. Joined by Federal Member for McEwen Rob Mitchell, Ms McBride caught up with The Bridge Youth and Family Services and the Mitchell Suicide Prevention Network to get an idea of the issues facing people in the region.

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News24, Weekend NewsDay, 18/10/2026, Jaynie Seal

Interview with Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health Emma McBride. McBride recalls speaking to a young woman yesterday regarding the Digital Duty of Care bill and regarding suicide, as she recalls speaking with said girl and a group of girls at Mitchell Shire. She states that those girls spoke about the impact of social media and the harm that its causing to young people.

Also reported by: News24 (Sydney)

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DEPARTMENT

Insurance rebate cut to hit seniors, public hospitals

The Australian, Editorials, 20/10/2026, Page 10

Labor's planned cut to the private health insurance rebate for seniors will have harmful consequences for Australians over 65 and for the overcrowded public hospital system. [...] Analysis from the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing shows the widely claimed government figure that only 44 4,000 Australians would dump private health insurance under the policy in 2028-29 would blow out to 78, ,000 just a year later.

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Victim-survivors of violence on temporary visas falling through the cracks, advocates say

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026

Grace* only needs to look at the dark lines traversing her wrists to remember the life she fled. [...] The federal Health Department said individuals might be eligible for Medicare by a ministerial order, and there was a range of orders in place for temporary visa holders in government programs, including the Forced Marriage Specialist Support Program.

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They paid $1.3m for a Chapman house. Three months later it was condemned

Canberra Times, General News, 19/10/2026, Jasper Lindell

Three months after a house in Chapman sold for $1.3 million to new owners this year, the property had

been condemned and bought by the ACT government after tests confirmed the house was tainted with asbestos insulation [...] Mr Fluffy loose-fill asbestos was pumped into homes as insulation between 1968 and 1979 despite an early warning from the federal Health Department the installations posed health risks.

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This pharmacist used to lose patients. A miracle drug is changing that

Canberra Times, General News, 19/10/2026, Zac Braxton-Smith

Chris Lawler has spent two decades helping some of Canberra's most vulnerable people stay alive. The Civic pharmacist has lost many patients from untreatable conditions. [...] A spokesperson for the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing said the purpose of providing naloxone for free was not to facilitate opioid use, but to reduce the risk of death if an overdose occurred.

Also reported by: Bega District News (Online), Braidwood Times (Online), Batemans Bay Post (Online)

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HCF Life and Recover Cover

HCF Australia, www.hcf.com.au, 19/10/2026

HCF, Australia's largest not-for-profit health fund, has released five reform priorities aimed at improving access to timely, affordable and better-connected mental health care, following a national Roundtable involving more than 40 leaders from across Australia's mental health sector. [...] Gold cover participation declined from approximately 40% to 28% between Q4 2019 and Q4 2025 – HCF's report, based on Department of Health, Disability and Ageing Private Health Insurance Reforms data.

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HCF: mental health claims pushing gold cover to breaking point

Insurance Business Australia, General News, 19/10/2026, Stephen Owens

HCF chief Lorraine Thomas says the cost of inpatient psychiatric care is pricing members out of top-tier cover, as a new white paper warns 1.2 million Australians could trade down within a decade. [...] Health minister Mark Butler put the identical bill back before parliament the next morning, so funds are lodging 2027 prices without knowing whether it will pass.

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Translating for your older parents at the GP? A professional interpreter can be free

Made in India Magazine, General News, 19/10/2026, Sneha Smriti

The son or daughter in the next chair, translating for an older parent at the GP, is doing a job that a professional interpreter can do at no cost to the family, as long as the parent is eligible for Medicare and the visit is a Medicare-rebateable one in private practice. [...] The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing funds seven organisations to deliver it, one for each state and territory, except that New South Wales and the ACT share one.

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Cervical screening self-collection puts the swab in your hands, behind a curtain

Made in India Magazine, General News, 19/10/2026, Mitali Sardesai

There is no speculum, and you take the sample yourself. The sample can be taken in a private space, the federal health department says, "behind a curtain or in the bathroom".

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Prefer another language at home? The free bowel cancer screening kit comes back less often

Made in India Magazine, General News, 19/10/2026, Swati Aggarwal

Every two years, Australians aged 50 to 74 find a free bowel cancer screening kit in the letterbox. The test is done at home and the samples go back in a reply paid envelope. [...] Instructions from the

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing ask for two tiny samples from two separate bowel motions and a completed participant details form.

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Child vaccinated in India? Australia's family payments still check the Australian Immunisation Register

Made in India Magazine, General News, 19/10/2026, Mahima Singh

There is no chickenpox vaccine on India's government schedule. Australia's National Immunisation Program funds one at 18 months. [...] The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing says the quickest way to get a child's statement is through a Medicare online account, and a GP or vaccination provider can also print a copy.

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The Wisdom of Two Worlds

Segmento, General News, 19/10/2026

Spanning neuroscience, cultural heritage and national science leadership, Anna-Maria Arabia's journey illustrates the powerful ways in which scientific thinking and human relationships can shape innovation, inclusion and societal progress. Science and tradition are often portrayed as opposing forces: one looks forward, the other backward; one challenges established knowledge, the other preserves it.

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News24, Weekend NewsDay, 18/10/2026, Jaynie Seal

Interview with Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health Emma McBride. McBride recalls speaking to a young woman yesterday regarding the Digital Duty of Care bill and regarding suicide, as she recalls speaking with said girl and a group of girls at Mitchell Shire. She states that those girls spoke about the impact of social media and the harm that its causing to young people.

Also reported by: News24 (Sydney)

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AGEING AND AGED CARE

Deserted at 97

Herald Sun, General News, 20/10/2026, Julie Cross, Page 4

Despite many falls, a five-week hospital stay and urgent letters from her doctor, 97 year-old Melbourne's Mollie Heywood is still waiting for an aged-care assessment for help at home more than six months after applying. After one of the falls, she lay on the floor for 20 hours.

Also reported by: Adelaide Advertiser (Adelaide), Hobart Mercury (Hobart), Geelong Advertiser (Geelong)

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'No easy paths': why calls grow for GST hike

Canberra Times, Business News, 20/10/2026, Andrew Brown, Page 18

The GST should be raised and expanded to include more products in an attempt to pay down Australia's ballooning national debt, a respected think tank has urged. The Grattan Institute has called for the federal government to lift the GST rate from 10 per cent to 15 per cent as part of an overhaul of the budget.

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Dying Queensland pensioner forced to pay hundreds for oxygen while awaiting support

Daily Telegraph Australia, General News, 19/10/2026, Tayla Couacaud

An elderly man who has just months to live is being forced to fork out hundreds of dollars for oxygen tanks as he languishes on a nine-month waitlist. Andrew Holdsworth, 70, was diagnosed with idiopathic

pulmonary fibrosis six years ago and was told by doctors he would have a three to seven-year life span.

Also reported by: *Geelong Advertiser (Online)*

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The higher-tax proposal experts say could 'secure' Australia's future

SBS, General News, 19/10/2026

Calls for changes to the GST have resurfaced, with the Grattan Institute proposing an increase while cutting income tax. The GST increase will raise about $76 billion a year, the Grattan Institute said.

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Slashing government spending needs to be more than a Coalition and One Nation slogan

The New Daily, General News, 19/10/2026

As in most political discourse these days, opposition slogans can only get you so far. Cuts in government spending would be useful in taking the pressure off the Reserve Bank in setting interest rates, but where should they be made?

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DISABILITY AND CARERS

Organiser of cancelled disability expos has died

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 20/10/2026, Julie Cross, Page 7

A disability expo organiser, who was being chased by hundreds of stallholders after a series of events were cancelled, has died. Robyn River, the wife of River Night, founder of Developing Australian Communities, went onto the company Facebook site on Monday to confirm his death.

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Melbourne rents hit record $600 a week as tenants sacrifice food and healthcare

NEWS.com.au, General News, 19/10/2026, David Bonaddio

Victorians are cutting back on meals, healthcare and heating as new research warns many renters couldn't absorb another $20 a week rise to their cost of housing. The Everybody's Home research found 43 per cent of Victorian respondents would have to cut back on essentials if their rent went up $20 a week.

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PRIMARY CARE

Alarm over health clinic closure

Age, General News, 20/10/2026, Gemma Grant, Page 6

A prominent community health organisation will close the doors of its major clinic in St Kilda this week, forcing vulnerable clients to instead travel to Prahran or South Melbourne for help. Better Health Network (BHN) formed in 2022 following the voluntary amalgamation of three smaller community health organisations.

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

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Horror twist to birth from hell

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 20/10/2026, Evangeline Polymeneas, Page 6

A devoted mum was forced to give birth early, before undergoing lifesaving surgery after she collapsed in the bathroom of the third hospital she had been transferred to. Mother of three Kaitlin Jagu was 30-weeks pregnant when she experienced excruciating abdominal pain while at work last Tuesday.

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Parties match health commitments

Sunraysia Daily, General News, 20/10/2026, Lochlainn Heley, Page 5

New election commitments have seen The Nationals match Labor's $53.6 million boost for patient travel, with member for Mildura Jade Benham adding pledges to halve waits for elective surgeries. The two parties announced matching packages for the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme earlier last week which would increase accommodation assistance from $49.50 to $125 and travel assistance from 21 cents to 35 cents per kilometre.

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Victims centre of care

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 20/10/2026, Tamsin Read, Page 1

A first-of-its-kind nurse-led sexual assault support clinic has opened in Toowoomba, giving victims another way to access immediate care. Located at Kobi Place on the Baillie Henderson Hospital campus, the clinic allows victims to access support within seven days of an assault without needing to present to the emergency department.

Also reported by: Townsville Bulletin (Online), Toowoomba Chronicle (Online), The Courier Mail (Online), Cairns Post (Online)

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How trip over east showed me how lucky WA is to have Telethon

West Australian, General News, 19/10/2026, Andrew Miller

One of the cats started a fight with my mother-in-law while we were away, and it lost. Previously, the offending tabby had been a bit hissy around our cleaner for no apparent reason.

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Dad died after boozed-up brawl with his son - but now his family is suing police, Triple Zero and paramedics: 'Deep drunken sleep'

Daily Mail UK, General News, 19/10/2026, Wayne Flower

A son who traded blows with his drunken father in a violent home brawl is now taking Victoria Police, Triple Zero Victoria and Ambulance Victoria to court. On Monday, Victoria Police apologised in the Coroners Court of Victoria for the death of John Makai, who died after lying unconscious for hours in a suburban holding cell.

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Is dental care too expensive in Australia? A NSW-based Filipina dentist weighs in

SBS, General News, 19/10/2026, Daniel Deleña

A dentist, Dr. Susan Leonora-Salazar, explained why dental care is expensive in Australia and cleared up common misconceptions about oral health care. Dr. Susan Leonora-Salazar said infection control, investments in dental equipment, and insurance costs drive up the high cost of dental care in Australia.

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Shire of Leonora chief executive appointed to Rural Health West board

Kalgoorlie Miner, General News, 19/10/2026

Rural Health West has welcomed three members of the community to its board, with the new directors bringing with them years of experience in government, health, financial management and leadership. Shire of Leonora chief executive Ty Matson, Geraldton medical practitioner Dr Pippin Holmes and Perth podiatrist Dr Andrew Schox have joined the board to support the organisation's advocacy for regional health services and workforces.

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Nurse-led clinics expand access to primary healthcare

Australian Nursing & Midwifery Journal, General News, 19/10/2026, Robert Fedele

When patients in the rural New South Wales town of Maclean couldn't get in to see a general practitioner (GP) they were left with few choices: wait weeks, drive to another town, try telehealth, or join the queue at the local emergency department. For advanced practice registered nurse Haley Hodgson, those options simply weren't good enough.

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POPULATION HEALTH

Executive trend divides doctors

Australian Financial Review, General News, 20/10/2026, Euan Black, Page 29

Amy Stanley, 51, put the brain fog and anxiety down to perimenopause.

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Illegal cigs to your door: black market tobacco moves to online delivery

Age, General News, 20/10/2026, James Costa, Page 11

Black-market tobacco shops are moving online, offering express delivery and steep bulk discounts to evade authorities and stay afloat as the state intensifies its crackdown on illicit sellers. Through a nondescript e-commerce site, The Age successfully ordered a carton of Manchester Blue a commonly used illicit cigarette brand delivered directly to its Docklands office.

Also reported by: Sydney Morning Herald (Online)

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Aussies watching their every move

Hobart Mercury, General News, 20/10/2026, Page 5

One in three Australians are now tracking every step, sleep and workout, with wearable technology fast becoming one of the nation's most popular preventive health tools. The latest Bupa Pulse Check found activity tracking platforms such as Fitbit, Apple Health and Strava are Australia's most popular digital health tools, ahead of telehealth, meditation and nutrition apps.

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Servo's black-market vape trade exposed in court

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 20/10/2026, Peta McEachern, Page 3

A Darling Downs service station involved in the illicit cigarette and vape trade has been hit with a $40,000 fine by a Toowoomba court. Good Luck Toowoomba Pty Ltd, trading as Rapid Petroleum Toowoomba in Wilsonton, appeared before Toowoomba Magistrates Court on Monday, where a plea of guilty was entered to two counts of storing and possessing illegal nicotine products on the premises as part of a business activity.

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Moss Vale residents tell court of personal toll after six-year plastics factory fight

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026

A mother described fearing for her children's health, a doctor recounted the psychological toll on families, and a retiree told of plans for a quieter life put on hold. They were among the eight residents who addressed the NSW Land and Environment Court at Moss Vale on Monday, as hundreds gathered for the opening of an appeal hearing into a proposed plastics recycling factory.

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Pregnant women face workplace hostility and ‘sham redundancies’, Australian human rights report finds

The Guardian, General News, 19/10/2026, Krishani Dhanji

Women are being forced out of employment through "sham redundancies", losing shifts and facing hostile work environments after having a baby, according to a report by the Australian Human Rights Commission, which warns parental discrimination remains a major barrier to gender equality. The commission's report suggests pregnancy discrimination is more prominent for vulnerable groups, including immigrant and First Nations women, people with disability and LGBTQ+ people.

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TWC launches menopause support initiative

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 19/10/2026

Terrywhite Chemmart has launched a new Menopause Special Interest Group, a dedicated cohort of community pharmacists undertaking menopause-specific training and mentoring to better support women through perimenopause and menopause. Developed in partnership with telehealth menopause service WellFemme, the initiative is designed to strengthen the role of pharmacists as accessible, trusted.

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CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND SCREENING

Screen alert

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 20/10/2026, Page 16

We pride ourselves on our resilience in this region. We batten down the hatches for cyclones, we endure the stifling summer build-up, and we invariably put the needs of our families and neighbours before our own. But sometimes, that stoicism becomes our greatest vulnerability especially when we ignore our own health.

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BreastScreen Townsville targets 16,000 checks as local mum issues early screening warning

Daily Telegraph Australia, General News, 19/10/2026, Nikita McGuire

A mother diagnosed with breast cancer at 47 despite having no symptoms has urged women not to delay free mammograms, as BreastScreen Townsville aims to conduct 16,000 scans over the next 12 months. BreastScreen Townsville is aiming to scan 16,000 regional women over the coming year, as a Townsville mother who was diagnosed with cancer at 47 urges others not to delay lifesaving checks.

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'Skin cancer changed my face, and my relationship to it'

NEWS.com.au, General News, 19/10/2026

It is estimated that 2 in 3 Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. And while melanoma is widely recognised as the most deadly form of skin cancer, non-melanoma (keratinocyte) skin cancer is the most common, accounting for around 99 per cent of cases.

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Voluntary assisted dying more popular than expected in WA, figures show

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026, Emma Wynne and Nadia Mitsopoulos

Almost 3 per cent of deaths in Western Australia are now due to patients using voluntary assisted dying (VAD), and authorities expect growth to continue. The annual report into the operations of WA's VAD legislation has found the uptake has increased significantly since the law came into effect in July 2021.

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'Our toddler had a swollen knee. Months later, we got a diagnosis we never saw coming.'

Mamamia, General News, 19/10/2026, Raffaella Ciccarelli

The only sign that something was wrong with little Scarlett was a swollen knee. It was 2023, just weeks out from Christmas, and her mum, Emily Hughes, immediately knew something wasn't right with her 18-month-old.

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Jacqui Lambie has spoken out about vaginal prolapse. What is it – and how common is it?

The Guardian, General News, 19/10/2026, Stephanie Convery

The Tasmanian senator Jacqui Lambie has previously spoken out about her experience of vaginal prolapse and the financial burden military veterans can face in accessing treatment for it. On Monday, Labor and crossbenchers expressed their support for the senator, as she condemned a recent One Nation cartoon that mocked her for having the condition.

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Prolapse is common after pregnancy and later in life. Here's what to look out for

Yahoo! News Australia, General News, 19/10/2026

The pelvic floor is a layer of muscles and connective tissues that supports the uterus, bladder, urethra, vagina and rectum. The pelvic floor supports the organs in your pelvis from underneath, almost like a hammock.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Workplace mental toll tipped to hit $27bn

The Australian, General News, 20/10/2026, Ewin Hannan, Page 4

The cost to the national economy of workplace mental illhealth would more than double to $27bn a year by 2042 without corrective action, with lost productivity accounting for more than half the direct cost, a new report finds. Research by Mentally Healthy Workplaces Australia found workplace mental health issues were currently costing the economy $12bn a year in lost GDP, equivalent to $436 per person per year, and would jump by 125 per cent over the next 15 years if no action was taken.

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How sweet can turn sour

Daily Telegraph, General News, 20/10/2026, Page 7

The food choices teenagers make could have implications beyond their physical health, with links to depression and anxiety. New research by experts at The University of Sydney links eating and consuming sugar to the later emergence of depression and anxiety symptoms.

Also reported by: Courier Mail (Brisbane), Hobart Mercury (Hobart), Geelong Advertiser (Geelong), Townsville Bulletin (Townsville)

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Special report: our police negotiators when every word counts

Canberra Times, General News, 20/10/2026, Bageshri Savyasachi, Page 1

AFP negotiators are called in for situations involving barricaded offenders or even hostages. Today, The Canberra Times goes behind the cordon to report on how these specialists defuse high-risk incidents in the ACT.

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Friendship is an investment that needs maintaining

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 20/10/2026, Brendan Meagher, Page 10

I recently flew interstate to catch up with a friend I have known for more than 30 years. It would have been easy to find reasons not to go.

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Men deserve their own day - and in fact they have one

Gold Coast Bulletin, General News, 20/10/2026, Ann Wason Moore, Page 6

'What about the men?" Just like clockwork, every year it is the same.

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Changing Australia: Nicole Highet and putting perinatal mental health in the spotlight

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026, Sally Sara

Childbirth - and the sleepless year or two thereafter - can be a significant mental load on mothers and the wider family unit. There's been a concerted effort by experts and advocates in recent years to put perinatal mental health in the spotlight in a bid to improve screening and access to care and treatment.

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Eating fruit linked to better mental health for teens

The New Daily, General News, 19/10/2026

Eating even one extra serve of fruit a day could help reduce anxiety and depression in teenagers, new research has found. The study by the University of Sydney surveyed young people for three years, with researchers finding that eating one extra serve of any type of fruit each day was associated with a 13 per cent lower risk of depression symptoms.

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IMMUNISATION

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HEALTH ECONOMICS & RESEARCH

The $110m lab designed to keep med-tech profits onshore

Australian Financial Review, General News, 20/10/2026, Brittney Levinson, Page 8

Twenty years ago, a Brisbane teenager received the first dose of the Gardasil cervical cancer drug, a vaccine against human papillomavirus co-developed by Ian Frazer at the University of Queensland.

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Risk to heart adding up

Hobart Mercury, General News, 20/10/2026, Page 3

Australia's updated cardiovascular disease risk calculator is identifying substantially more Australians aged 45-74 as being at "intermediate" risk of heart attack and stroke, Researchers from Australian National University and QIMR Berghofer analysed data from more than 115,000 people aged 45 to 74 who had visited a GP between 2020 and 2022, none of whom had a history of heart disease or stroke.

Also reported by: Geelong Advertiser (Geelong), Gold Coast Bulletin (Gold Coast)

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Trial to test endometriosis

Hobart Mercury, General News, 20/10/2026, Page 3

More than 350 women from across Australia have registered expressions of interest to participate in a groundbreaking Charles Sturt University endometriosis trial. [...] According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, endometriosis affects about one in seven Australian women, with diagnosis taking 6-8 years on average.

Also reported by: Geelong Advertiser (Geelong)

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Health Innovation South West and Helfie AI announce partnership to evaluate digital-first hypertension screening

Canberra Times, General News, 19/10/2026

Helfie AI and UK-based Health Innovation South West have announced a partnership to explore how digital-first approaches to hypertension screening can support earlier identification of people at risk of high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. The collaboration will test and evaluate the potential of smartphone-based screening technology to engage people in prevention, particularly those who may face barriers to accessing traditional healthcare services.

Also reported by: Bathurst Western Advocate (Online)

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A retired physician's reflections on Evidence-Based Medicine and AI

Medical Journal of Australia, General News, 19/10/2026, James Isbister

I've spent four decades in clinical practice, teaching and medical research, and I've watched medicine transform in ways I never anticipated. With a degree of nostalgia, when I started at medical school, we learned medicine as both science and art, a craft passed down through generations of physicians who understood that each patient has a unique biology and psychology to be explored and understood, not merely a point on a statistical map.

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2GB, Drive, 19/10/2026, Clinton Maynard

Research from the University of Sydney is linking consuming sugar to the later emergence of depression and anxiety. The researchers also found that eating one additional serving of any type of fruit each day was associated with a 13% lower risk of depression.

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FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Campaign launched in the Kimberley to encourage conversations surrounding gambling harm

West Australian, General News, 19/10/2026, Joshua Dowdall

A new campaign has been launched in the Kimberley, encouraging several Aboriginal communities, including those in Broome and Fitzroy Crossing, to start conversations about gambling harm. The We Win When We Yarn campaign was developed in collaboration with various Aboriginal communities and Kimberley health services to raise awareness of gambling harm, reduce stigma and promote available support services.

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Public intoxication reforms slash deaths in custody, report finds

Bendigo Advertiser, General News, 20/10/2026, Duncan Murray, Page 3

Victoria's decriminalisation of public intoxication is making an impact, with no related deaths in custody or people locked up purely as a result of being drunk in public. An evaluation of the 2023 reform, made public on Friday, applauded the efforts of police to maintain a healthled approach since the changes were introduced.

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Why Mount Isa was the right pick for this ambitious pharmacist

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 19/10/2026, Daneka Hill

A pharmacy intern who packed his bags and swapped Brisbane city life for Mount Isa has won a state award for his advocacy work. Sebastian Harper said he decided to do his one-year paid internship at Mount Isa Pharmacy First after having a positive experience earlier in his degree working a placement in the Mount Isa Hospital.

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More complaints being made to ACT Human Rights Commission as people report vilification, racism, elder abuse

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026, Charlie Gore

More people are turning to the ACT Human Rights Commission for help, as they record a 21 per cent increase in complaints lodged last financial year. The commission received 2,068 complaints in 2025-2026, and more than 2,100 enquiries.

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Indigenous rehab services saving lives

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026, Lucy Barbour

New data shows Indigenous Australians are dying from accidental drug overdoses at four times the rate of other Australians. But Aboriginal-run rehab services are quietly helping young people turn their lives around.

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First Nations knowledge must help shape the doctors who serve our communities

National Indigenous Times, General News, 19/10/2026, Nicole Brown

First Nations knowledge and leadership must help shape how future doctors are trained, according to a new paper calling for medical education that responds to the needs, priorities and experiences of the communities it serves. Led by Flinders University and published in the British Medical Journal, the paper identifies rural and remote medical training as an opportunity to strengthen healthcare access, build a sustainable workforce and improve health outcomes across Australia and beyond.

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Human rights safeguards sought after closure of NT homeless shelter

National Indigenous Times, General News, 19/10/2026, Dechlan Brennan

The Northern Territory Government must implement safeguards to ensure it meets its human rights obligations and responsibilities, the Human Rights Commission says. It comes after the Country Liberal Party (CLP) Government was widely criticised for closing the YiSSA short-stay accommodation facility — Darwin's largest homeless shelter — and moving residents 100 kilometres away to Batchelor.

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Noongar Elder Robert Isaacs recognised with honorary doctorate

National Indigenous Times, General News, 19/10/2026, Jackson Clark

Noongar Elder and community leader Robert Isaacs has received an honorary doctorate from the University of Notre Dame Australia in recognition of more than 50 years of service to Aboriginal people.

The Honorary Doctor of Letters was presented during a graduation ceremony in Fremantle, acknowledging his extensive contributions to healthcare, housing, education and reconciliation.

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PUBLIC HOSPITAL AND HEALTH REFORM

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CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

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HEALTH WORKFORCE

Nurse who faked credentials, used a ghost doctor struck off

Launceston Examiner, General News, 20/10/2026, Matt Maloney, Page 4

A Tasmanian emergency nurse who claimed a malware email awarded her a university degree has had her registration cancelled and been barred from reapplying for at least three years. Lauren Elizabeth Butler was recently found to have lodged at least five fraudulent applications for roles with Ambulance Tasmania and at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) between 2020 and 2023.

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Speech pathologist takes home national allied health accolades

Newcastle Herald, General News, 20/10/2026, Lisa Rockman and Jessica Brown, Page 19

A growing Understanding has celebrated its 10th year by winning two major national allied health awards. The Newcastle and Lake Macquarie practice received the Allied Health Paediatric Team Excellence award at the 2026 Australian Allied Health Awards in Adelaide on October 10, and practice director Lauren Haskins was named Speech Pathologist of the Year.

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Aged care nurse in work ban

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 20/10/2026, Vanda Carson, Page 2

An aged care nurse accused of rough or inappropriate care and attempted force-feeding has been slapped with a ban on working as a nurse. Biju Akkamparambil, who worked as an assistant in nursing at Parklands Residential Aged Care in Townsville, was on Friday prohibited from providing any health service, paid or otherwise, in a clinical capacity.

Also reported by: Northern Territory News (Online)

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Labor demands urgent ambulance review after data reveals 44 per cent overtime budget cut

Daily Telegraph Australia, General News, 19/10/2026, Bridget Clarke

Labor has demanded an urgent ambulance funding review after new data revealed Tasmanian paramedics worked 125,725 overtime hours last year, costing nearly double the government's budget. Data obtained by Labor and released under Right to Information this week show Tasmanian paramedics worked 125,725 hours of overtime in the last year at a cost of $12.7m.

Also reported by: The Mercury (Online), Northern Territory News (Online)

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Victorian allied health workers to go on strike as they reject Carroll government's pay offer

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 19/10/2026, Tia Clarkson-Pascoe

Physiotherapists, social workers, radiographers and other allied health professionals will launch fresh work bans on Monday, just two days before public hospital doctors are set to walk off the job. The Carroll government is trying to silence thousands of angry health workers with temporary pay deals aimed at halting strikes during the election

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New guide for healthcare workers to identify modern slavery victims

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026

Sarah never thought she would end up trapped in a modern slavery situation. Six years ago, she escaped from debt bondage after meeting a man who promised to help her set up a business.

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Dedicated Nanango paramedic and father of three dies suddenly from heart failure

Toowoomba Chronicle, General News, 17/10/2026, Carlie Walker

A Queensland paramedic who spent years helping others through their worst moments has died suddenly, just three weeks before his 23rd wedding anniversary. After almost 23 years of marriage, Kim Muldoon thought she and her husband Chris were beginning another chapter of their life together.

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Fake cosmetic nurse ordered to complete 150 hours of community work

Australian Nursing & Midwifery Journal, General News, 19/10/2026

A Victorian woman who falsely claimed she was a registered nurse and gave a cosmetic injectable treatment to a woman that caused significant bruising has been convicted and ordered to serve a Community Corrections Order. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) investigated and prosecuted Betty Sonia Bieniek for describing herself as an 'RN' in her advertising on social media, claiming to be qualified to practise as a nurse, and holding herself out as a registered nurse.

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'I've been a nurse for almost a decade. Being punched on shift isn't what broke me.'

Mamamia, General News, 19/10/2026, Ailish Delaney

Amanda* was getting her daughter ready for the park when something in her gave way. Normally, she'd just shrug it off when her toddler didn't listen.

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WA's best in general practice recognised at 2026 RACGP awards

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, General News, 19/10/2026

Western Australia's leading GPs, supervisors, registrars, educators and practices have been recognised at the 2026 Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) WA Awards, celebrating excellence in patient care, education, leadership and service to the community.

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Tasmanian GPs of the Year recognised in RACGP awards as more than 30 new GPs join the profession

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, General News, 19/10/2026

Australia's leading GP training college, the Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP), has welcomed new GPs to Tasmania's health workforce and recognised the state's top GPs and practices at a ceremony on Saturday 17 October.

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PSA announces Queensland Graduate of the Year

Retail Pharmacy, General News, 19/10/2026

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is proud to present the Professor James Dare Pharmacy Graduate of the Year Award to Georgia Muir from Griffith University. Each year, every School of Pharmacy in Queensland nominates one graduating student who has demonstrated initiative and leadership, contributed to the student community, exhibited characteristics consistent with the

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The political power of doctors in training united

Medical Journal of Australia, General News, 19/10/2026

By standing together, Victorian doctors in training have courageously drawn national and state attention to hazardous public hospital working conditions and their consequences for all health workers and patients. Whatever the outcome of Victoria's doctors in training industrial dispute over unsafe working hours, fatigue, unpaid overtime, staffing shortages and pay, the protracted 14-month Victorian Government negotiations with AMA Victoria and ASMOF, are a compelling national case study

Also reported by: *Medical Journal of Australia (Online)*

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TWC recognises next generation

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 19/10/2026

At the James Cook University annual awards ceremony last week, TerryWhite Chemmart presented the 2026 Prescribing Practice Excellence Award to Sean Fitzpatrick. The award recognised Fitzpatrick's outstanding performance and engagement throughout the Graduate Certificate of Advanced Practice and Prescribing for Pharmacists.

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‘Outstanding' Tasmanian GPs celebrated

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, General News, 19/10/2026

Fellows were welcomed, and stand-out contributions acknowledged, in the Hobart ceremony. New RACGP Fellows and award-winning GPs were acknowledged at a Hobart ceremony last weekend, including Professor Tania Winzenberg, who received a Life Membership award.

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TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

PBAC backs proposed amendments to PBS listings of ADHD meds

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, General News, 19/10/2026

Changes to PBS restrictions for atomoxetine and guanfacine for the treatment of ADHD are being supported by the PBAC The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) is backing a move to broaden access to atomoxetine and guanfacine for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AHPA) through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Read More

Asthma, RSV and cancer drugs get PBAC nod

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 19/10/2026

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) has released the outcomes of its Sep 2026 intracycle meeting, recommending subsidised listings for products used to treat asthma, breast cancer, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and more. Among the recommendations are Breztri Aerosphere (AstraZeneca), a new form of budesonide with glycopyrronium and formoterol for.

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Nirsevimab recommended for NIP

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, General News, 19/10/2026

The PBAC has recommended nirsevimab be added to the NIP to help protect infants from RSV. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) said the use of nirsevimab (sold as Beyfortus) would give extra protection to infants that might be missed by the National RSV Mother and Infant Protection Program (RSV-MIPP), such as those born within two weeks from their mother receiving the RSVpreF (sold as Abrysvo) vaccine.

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MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

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BENEFITS INTEGRITY

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AUSTRALIAN CDC

India-born and worried about TB? No Medicare card is needed at a NSW chest clinic

Made in India Magazine, General News, 19/10/2026, Divya Mangal

You do not need a Medicare card to be seen at a NSW chest clinic, or a referral from a doctor. NSW Health's TB fact sheet says all investigations and treatment at the clinics are free and confidential. [...] Those figures come from a national report published on 21 July 2026 in Communicable Diseases Intelligence , a peer-reviewed journal published by the Australian Centre for Disease Control.

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THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

Unapproved peptides lead to daily hospital visits

Daily Telegraph, General News, 20/10/2026, David Hannant, Page 10

At least two people a day are being admitted to hospital in NSW because off illness or injury related to peptide use, stark figures have revealed. [...] Many of those readily available, such as BPC-157, GHKCu, TB-500, retatrutide and CJC-1295 are not currently approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Also reported by: The Australian (Australia), NEWS.com.au (Online)

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‘Russian roulette': NSW emergency department visits surge amid dangerous peptide fad

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 19/10/2026, Jessica McSweeney

Hundreds of patients a month are arriving at NSW emergency rooms after injecting unapproved peptides as a black market of injectables fuelled by wellness influencers booms in Australia. [...] Unlike

other peptides such as Ozempic, retatrutide is not approved for use by the TGA, and is undergoing clinical trials in humans.

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Spike in emergency department visits due to peptide use

Canberra Times, General News, 19/10/2026, Farid Farid

More than 1000 people have visited emergency departments in the country's largest healthcare system over unapproved peptide injections in a trend driven by wellness influencers, with young people the most enthusiastic consumers at risk. [...] While some peptide products are approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, many products advertised online are not and may be unlawful to import, supply or advertise including BPC-157, GHK-Cu, TB-500, retatrutide and CJC-1295.

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Illegal peptide warning after surge in ED visits

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026, Katherine Gregory

The influencers promoting them will tell you they can make you feel better, look better and live longer, but authorities are warning those using unapproved peptides are at real risk of getting very sick. NSW Health says the number of people presenting at emergency departments in connection with the use of the unregulated products has soared over the past year.

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Health authorities issue unapproved peptide use warning after surge in NSW hospital visits

ABC Online, General News, 19/10/2026, Gavin Coote

A surge in hospitalisations related to the use of unapproved peptides promoted as "wellness" products has prompted a warning from NSW health authorities. [...] Peptides are short chains of amino acids that make up proteins in our bodies and there are a number of peptide-based medicines that are approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

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Falls, kidney damage link to polypharmacy studied

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, General News, 19/10/2026, Chris Brooker

Australian researchers say their new study supports an increase in medicines reviews, particularly those conducted by pharmacists. An estimated 2.3 million older Australians are being dispensed multiple medicines associated with falls and fractures, new research reveals.

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Peptide warning as emergency department presentations soar

Newcastle Herald, General News, 19/10/2026, Dylan Nicholson

Hunter emergency departments have recorded a surge in emergency department presentations linked with unapproved peptide use. [...] The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has flagged unapproved peptides as a compliance priority because of concerns about product quality, sterility, dosing accuracy and safety.

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AI medical scribes face stricter TGA oversight

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, General News, 19/10/2026

There has been a rapid uptake of AI medical scribes in general practice. Eight of 12 medical scribes considered in a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) review are 'likely' to meet the threshold for a medical device, the regulator has said in a report with significant implications for their oversight.

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ABC, ABC News, 19/10/2026, Jeremy Fernandez

Unapproved peptides have driven a surge in monthly emergency department presentations, with the

number rising dramatically from just five in July last year to more than 200 last month alone. Health Minister Ryan Park urges people not to use unapproved substances.

Similar coverage reported by: Channel 10 (Sydney)

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News24, AM Agenda, 19/10/2026, Laura Jayes

Interview with NSW Poisons Information Centre Medical Director Darren Roberts, on health officials warning about unapproved peptides after a surge in hospitalisations. Roberts says unapproved peptides have not been assessed by the Australian Government and the TGA for efficacy or safety. He states that emergency department presentations have surged after reports of severe nausea, dehydration and allergic reactions due to unregulated peptide use.

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ABC Radio Canberra, PM, 19/10/2026, Samantha Donovan

Authorities are warning that people using peptides, which have not yet been assessed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for safety, quality or effectiveness, are at real risk of getting very sick. NSW Health has today released statistics showing that the number of uses of unregulated products has soared over the past year.

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TGA changes widen MS-2 Step access

Australian Pharmacist, General News, 19/10/2026, Chloe Hava

Lifting Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) restrictions on MS-2 Step has led to almost 50% more pharmacies ordering the medicine , new research shows. But in over half of Australian postcodes, no pharmacies have ordered MS-2 Step, and patients face another hurdle in finding where it's available.

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ABC Radio Sydney, Drive, 19/10/2026, Thomas Oriti

Interview with NSW Poisons Information Centre Medical Director Darren Roberts, on health officials warning about unapproved peptides after a surge in hospitalisations. Roberts says peptides have not been assessed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for efficacy or safety. He also notes that people who took unregulated peptides have reported severe nausea, vomiting, dehydration, abdominal pain, and allergic reactions.

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OFFICE OF DRUG CONTROL

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