

Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

TODAY'S NEWS

Thursday, 22 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

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Executive Summary

- **The Australian** (page 5) reports that University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Centre researchers identified a new depression subtype called "circadian depression", which is linked to biological changes in the body and disruptions in the body clock, and has higher genetic risks of ADHD and anxiety. *Also reported by: Australian Financial Review, ABC Online, Sydney Morning Herald, The Guardian*
- **The Daily Telegraph** (page 21) reports the NSW Drug Checking Service analysed 255 drug samples at the Knockout Outdoor music festival earlier this month, detecting high-dose MDMA in some pills,

while ketamine and cocaine were also found. A spokesperson said festival patrons were alerted of these findings through the festival platform live chat.

- **The Age** (page 4) reports that health experts warn that rising temperatures and more frequent heatwaves can increase stillbirths and premature births, trigger heart attacks, worsen mental health and chronic illnesses.
- **The Hobart Mercury** (page 3) reports that according to AIHW data, the number of e-scooter and e-bike hospitalisations have more than tripled since 2019, with spokesperson Jacqueline Rek saying "findings should not be interpreted as precise counts of injuries" but ro help understand the risks of e-mobility devices. *Also reported by: ABC Online*
- **The Hobart Mercury** (page 5) reports University of Queensland researchers have found estimated global measles cases in children under five rose by 40 per cent between 2019 and 2023, attributing it to declining vaccination rates since the pandemic.
- **The Northern Territory News** (page 13) reports that Former NSW Ambulance commissioner and chief executive Dr Dominic Morgan AM ASM has been appointed chief executive of the Royal Flying Doctor Service's SA/NT branch, replacing retiring chief executive Tony Vaughan ASM, who has held the role for 13 years.
- **The Canberra Times** (online) reports that almost 300 NSW GPs completed training to diagnose ADHD that could help reduce specialist wait times and fees, with around 70 per cent of the first cohort practising in regional and rural areas.
- **The Guardian** (online) reports that new guidelines have been issued by Australia's peak allergy body after evidence found up to 90 per cent of people who report a penicillin allergy do not have one, aiming to reduce misdiagnosis and address antimicrobial resistance.

Minister Butler

Don't let horror dim our right to debate

Daily Telegraph, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Andrew Bolt, Page 13

The attack on Helen Haines is so shocking. [...] We have "hate and disrespect and intolerance in our political debate that we never really used to see," claims Health Minister Mark Butler.

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Also reported by: *Geelong Advertiser*, *Herald Sun*, *The Courier Mail*, *Adelaide Now*, *Daily Telegraph Australia*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, *Cairns Post*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, *Herald Sun*, *Courier Mail*

One million calls to 1800MEDICARE

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 21 Oct 2026, Page 1

More than one million Australians have accessed free health advice through the Australian Government's 1800MEDICARE telehealth and digital service, Minister for Health Mark Butler has announced. The 24/7 service connects callers with a registered nurse, who provides expert advice and connects people to the right care, including GP telehealth services.

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Also reported by: *Pharmacy Daily*

Labor won't take no for an answer – and older Australians are paying the price

Mackay and Whitsunday Life, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

Apparently, when the Albanese Government doesn't like the answer, it simply asks the question again. Less than 24 hours after the Senate delivered a resounding rejection of Labor's assault on older Australians' private health insurance rebates, Health Minister Mark Butler was back in Parliament introducing the very same legislation.

Continue reading

1800MEDICARE passes one million calls

Pulse+IT, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

More than one million calls have been made to Australia's 1800MEDICARE service since its launch in January, with nearly 60,000 callers receiving free virtual GP consultations and more than 170,000 reportedly diverted from emergency departments or calling Triple Zero. [...] New figures released by Health and Ageing Minister Mark Butler show one in ten callers were referred to an urgent care service, while one in ten were classified as having been diverted from an emergency department or calling Triple Zero.

Continue reading

Patrick McGorry Criticises Regional Mental Health Care

ABC Radio Canberra, PM, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Samantha Donovan

Interview with Professor Patrick McGorry, psychiatrist and Executive Director of Orygen, about mental health services in Australia. McGorry stated that regional and metropolitan mental health systems are failing, leaving severely ill people languishing in communities or ending up in prison. He called on state governments to properly resource community mobile outreach teams to ensure a health-first response.

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Butler Seeks to Revive Private Health Changes

MIX 104.9, 07:30 Local News, FM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, N/A

Advocates for older Australians hope the Senate will again block Labor's proposed private health cover changes if they are revived. Minister for Health and Ageing Mark Butler reportedly wants to resuscitate the Albanese government's plan to scrap the private health insurance rebate entirely. Advocates warned the move would strain seniors' day-to-day living costs and healthcare access.

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Minister McAllister

No relevant coverage.

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Minister Rae

Independent expert review of aged care assessment tool

Weekly Times, General News, 21 Oct 2026, Page 9

The albanese Government will commission an independent review of the aged care classification and prioritisation assessment mechanisms, as the latest step in a series of refinements the Government is making to ensure older Australians can have confidence in the assessment process. [...] "We have made refinements where people's experience of the system shows it is needed," said Minister for Aged Care and Seniors, Sam Rae.

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Also reported by: *The Weekly Times*

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Assistant Minister McBride

MATES receives funding boost for workplace suicide prevention programs

tradeearthmovers.com.au, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

Federal funding will support the continuation of MATES' workplace mental health and suicide prevention services across construction, mining, energy and manufacturing MATES in Construction has secured $6.94 million in Australian government funding to continue delivering workplace mental health and suicide prevention programs across several industries through 2029. [...] The announcement was made during a visit to a Sydney construction site by minister for employment and workplace relations Amanda Rishworth and assistant minister for mental health and suicide prevention Emma McBride.

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Assistant Minister White

Tasmanian premier Jeremy Rockliff's instigation of Christmas 'culture war' out of character

ABC Online, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Lucy MacDonald

October is too early to be talking about Christmas. [...] "Leaders need to hold themselves to a higher standard." In the context of a conversation about the political climate nationally, Federal Assistant Minister Rebecca White said politicians needed to dial the temperature down and lead by example.

Continue reading

Also reported by: *WEB OZ Arab Media*

Government Defends Changes to Health Insurance Subsidies

ABC Radio Hobart, Statewide Mornings, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Leon Compton

In an interview, Rebecca White discussed government plans to alter private health insurance subsidies for people over 65 to redirect $3 billion into aged care. She confirmed the bill was reintroduced to the Lower

House following Senate opposition. White clarified the subsidy is not being removed entirely, noting eligible individuals will still receive up to 25%.

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Aged Care Television Fees Under Scrutiny

ABC Radio Hobart, Statewide Mornings, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Leon Compton

Interview with Assistant Federal Minister for Health and Ageing Rebecca White about residential aged care fees and television charges. White said communal televisions are a minimum standard, though individual room fees vary by provider. She urged families facing unfair costs to contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, noting powers have increased to penalise non-compliance.

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Special Envoy Repacholi

Legends of Launceston Event Announced

LA FM, Breakfast, FM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Belinda King

In an interview with Federal Bass MP Jess Teasdale about the Legends of Launceston event, she highlighted work with Dan Repacholi, Special Envoy for Men's Health. The initiative addresses regional men dying 13 years younger than female peers and unites local groups. Taking place at Riverbend Park in November, the event promotes health checks and community connection.

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Department

Osteoporosis program success

Pharmacy Daily, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

Pharmacists are being encouraged to register their community pharmacy to participate in a first-of-its-kind Australia-wide osteoporosis health literacy initiative, a collaboration between Healthy Bones Australia, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), Fred IT Group and Healthily. [...] The initiative is funded by the Australian Department of Health, Disability and Ageing under the Quality Use of Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Pathology Program.

Continue reading

Also reported by: ***Pharmacy Daily***

Just seven aged care homes in Australia need improvement?

The Weekly Source, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Caroline Egan

The Government's latest Star Ratings data again raises questions about the accuracy and usefulness of the measure. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's Star Ratings data, as of 13 October 2026, shows three homes received 1 Star (significant improvement needed) and four received 2 Stars (improvement needed).

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Ageing and Aged Care

Toddlers singing brings joy to aged-care home residents

West Australian, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Rosa Griffith

For more than two decades a local childcare centre has continued an annual tradition of paying a visit to residents at Southern Cross Care's Victoria Park Nursing Home, spreading joy with musical performances and gifts. This year's visit on Tuesday morning celebrated International Day of the Older Person, with children from Goldfields Child Care Centre delivering gifts, cards and paintings to help combat isolation in the nursing home.

Continue reading

Also reported by: ***Kalgoorlie Miner***

Consent and Romance in Aged Care

4BC, Drive, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Carla Bignasca

In an interview with Attwood Marshall Lawyers senior paralegal Bindy Marshall, discussions focused on intimate relationships and consent among aged care residents with dementia. Marshall stated that a dementia diagnosis does not automatically remove a resident's ability to consent, though consent must be ongoing and informed. She added that enduring powers of attorney do not grant families unrestricted authority to veto relationships.

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Hospital Patients Awaiting Aged Care Beds Rise

ABC Radio Adelaide, Breakfast, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Sonya Feldhoff & Jules Schiller

South Australia currently has 500 hospital patients waiting solely for aged care beds. According to a broadcast on 891 ABC Adelaide, this figure represents a substantial rise from approximately 50 patients who were awaiting placement prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Disability and Carers

NDIS blowouts lead $145b surge in surprise costs

Australian Financial Review, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Michael Read, Page 5

The Albanese government has faced $145 billion in spending blowouts since coming to office on the back of repeated cost overruns in major programs including the National Disability Insurance Scheme, fuelling economists' concerns.

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Concerns for Goondiwindi man Shane Danes after NDIS funding changes

ABC Online, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Elly Bradfield & Grace Nakamura

Shane Danes is a "social butterfly", a die-hard Parramatta Eels fan and loves classic Aussie rock. [...] He also needs round-the-clock care at his home in the rural Queensland town of Goondiwindi, which is why Ms Doughty was so worried when the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) began to reduce his budget.

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Primary Care

Tailem Bend's clinic win

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Jacinta Round, Page 12

A regional town's embattled medical clinic will reopen after receiving a "last resort" law exemption allowing the state government to operate the bulk-billed GP service. The Murraylands Medical Centre in Tailem Bend closed on October 14 when independent operator Solitaire Medical Group, which has rented GP rooms from the state government since 2018, departed the practice.

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Also reported by: *Adelaide Now*, *Daily Telegraph Australia*, *Cairns Post*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *The Courier Mail*, *Northern Territory News*, *Geelong Advertiser*, *The Mercury*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*

Geraldton doctor Richard Taylor named 2026 Royal Australian College of GPs WA GP of the Year

West Australian, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Sienna Seychell

Geraldton GP Richard Taylor has brought home a top honour, claiming the 2026 Royal Australian College of GPs WA General Practitioner of the Year Award. Dr Taylor is a second-generation GP and has been recognised for his strong commitment to community-focused care and the relationships with his patients in the local community.

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Also reported by: *Kalgoorlie Miner*

ECU's Midwifery Student-led Clinic launched at Bunbury's Milligan Community Centre

West Australian, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Rose Patane

South West midwifery students and pregnant women are set to benefit from a new initiative which will provide accessible, bulk-billed pregnancy and postnatal appointments for more than 100 women each year. On Tuesday, Edith Cowan University officially launched its new Midwifery Student-led Clinic at Bunbury's Milligan Community Centre.

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Also reported by: *Kalgoorlie Miner*

Majority of Australians who report penicillin allergy not truly allergic

The Guardian, Internet, 22 Oct 2026, Jack Larkin

The majority of Australians who report a penicillin allergy are not truly allergic, prompting the peak body for immunologists to change its guidelines in a bid to reduce hospitals stays and tackle antimicrobial resistance. Penicillin, one of the most commonly prescribed antibiotics in Australia, was thought to cause allergies in 10% of Australians, or about 2.8 million people.

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WA Awards celebrate ‘very best of our profession'

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

A cohort of GPs, supervisors, GPs in training, educators, and practices who ‘exemplify the very best of our profession’ have been celebrated at the 2026 RACGP Western Australian Awards. The ceremony recognises excellence in patient care, education, leadership, and service to communities across the state, including in WA’s rural and regional areas, with seven awards handed out on the night.

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Health of the Nation shows ‘strong reasons to be optimistic'

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

A first look at the RACGP’s 2026 Health of the Nation report reveals that investing in general practice is returning positive results, but work is still needed. Officially launched on 28 October at Canberra’s Parliament House, the college’s annual, nationwide GP survey informs its General Practice: Health of the Nation report, which is integral in shaping asks to policymakers and ongoing advocacy.

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Pharmacy Prescribing Trials Spark GP Concerns

2GB, Drive, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Clinton Maynard

In an interview with Dr Rebecca Hoffman from the New South Wales RACGP, discussion focused on pharmacy prescribing trials initiated amid declining bulk billing GPs. With patients facing out-of-pocket costs of $50 to $70 for repeat scripts, trials granting pharmacists prescribing powers offer relief, though doctors remain concerned about the impact on their profession.

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RACGP Warns Against Expanding Pharmacist Prescribing Powers

2GB, Drive, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Clinton Maynard

In an interview with Dr Rebekah Hoffman from the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Hoffman discussed concerns over expanding pharmacists' prescribing powers. Hoffman stated that general practitioners are concerned about initiating new medications without a proper diagnosis, urging governments to establish clear safety barriers after a report revealed serious injuries linked to prescription-related incidents.

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Community Pharmacist Defends Pharmacist Prescribing Trials

2GB, Drive, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Clinton Maynard

Interview with Catherine Bronger, a community pharmacist of Australia, about whether it is safe for pharmacists to prescribe medications. Bronger defended pharmacist prescribing, highlighting rigorous New South Wales trials involving 17,000 UTI patients where 99 per cent of pharmacists followed clinical protocols. She noted broader scope of practice changes are being examined by the pharmacy board.

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RACGP Highlights Positive General Practice Trends

ABC Radio Adelaide, Mornings, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Rory Mcclaren

In an interview with Dr Sian Goodson, South Australian Chair of the Royal Australian College of GPs, she discussed findings from the college's annual Health of the Nation report. Goodson noted data showing 99% of Australians accessed a GP when needed. She also called for state government incentives for overseas trained doctors to boost South Australia's workforce.

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Population Health

Experts sound health alarm over hot summer

Age, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Melissa Cunningham, Page 4

As another El Nino summer approaches, health experts are raising the alarm over the potentially fatal consequences of higher temperatures and an increased number of hot days expected around the state. Mounting research showing soaring temperatures can increase rates of stillbirth and premature birth, trigger heart attacks, worsen mental health and exacerbate chronic illnesses comes amid warnings that Victorian emergency departments remain severely underprepared for a surge in heatwaves that are forecast to lead to record-shattering death tolls.

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Also reported by: *Sydney Morning Herald*

More hurt via e-mobility

Hobart Mercury, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Page 3

The rate of people hospitalised in Australia due to e-scooters and e-bikes has likely more than tripled over five years. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare said it was hard to accurately count the number of

linked hospitalisations because current data lumps them in with other similar forms of transportation.

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Also reported by: *ABC Online*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *Northern Territory News*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*

Female main DV victims

Hobart Mercury, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Page 7

In 2024-25, almost nine in 10 hospitalisations in Australia involving treatment for assault by a partner were for females. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare also says half (49 per cent) of hospitalisations in 2024-25 that involved treatment for assault and a perpetrator was specified were due to family and domestic violence (FDV).

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Also reported by: *Geelong Advertiser*, *Northern Territory News*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*

Riding our luck on injury

Newcastle Herald, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Gabriel Fowler, Page 1

Peter Papadatos has spent the past 10 months in hospital recovering from an e-scooter accident. He has missed the birth of a grandchild, who he may never have the chance to hold, and lost the ability to walk, talk, and take care of himself.

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E-bike injuries surge 85 per cent

Geelong Advertiser, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Lincoln Holmes, Page 3

E-bike injuries among Geelong residents have jumped by 85 per cent in a year, new data shows, with teenagers emerging as the most frequently injured riders. New data from the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit at Monash University's Accident Research Centre shows 58 emergency presentations involving e-bike injuries were recorded among Greater Geelong residents between July 2020 and June 2025.

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Sleep Apnea Risks and CPAP Treatments

2CC, Breakfast, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Stephen Cenatiempo

In an interview with CPAP Direct CEO Bryce Perrin about sleep apnea, he warned that 80% of sufferers remain undiagnosed. Perrin explained that the condition causes airways to close during sleep, elevating risks of stroke and dementia. He advocated using continuous positive air pressure devices, emphasising the need for proper support to select suitable equipment.

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Chronic Conditions and Screening

Thiel, OpenAI back Australian start-up's bid to zap brain cancer

Australian Financial Review, Companies and Markets, 22 Oct 2026, Emma Rapaport, Page 15

Peter Thiel's $24 billion San Francisco venture capital firm has joined OpenAI's venture capital fund in backing a major investment in Coherence Neuro, a start-up cofounded by Australian electrical engineer Elise Jenkins, which is trialling an implantable...

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Christina Applegate's MS misdiagnosis shows its devastating complexity

The Australian, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Penny Timms

When US actor Christina Applegate was told she had been misdiagnosed with multiple sclerosis she was left in tears of frustration. [...] The group has been established to support GPs in managing complex and misunderstood illnesses including MS, chronic fatigue and more controversial illnesses like Lyme disease, and try to raise awareness of the illnesses.

Continue reading

This WA school funding rule means eight-year-olds could be managing life-threatening condition alone

Sydney Morning Herald, Internet, 22 Oct 2026, Holly Thompson

Declan Marshall was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at just five years old and wears an insulin pump and glucose monitor constantly. He said managing the condition could be hard, but he struggled more while sitting in class at Capel Primary School.

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Peter A. Comensoli warns against expanding abortion and euthanasia

Daily Telegraph Australia, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Staff writers

Melbourne’s Catholic Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli has used the horror sparked by a planned livestreamed US execution to call out what he describes as a hidden “culture of death” closer to home, criticising major Australian political parties for failing to properly address abortion and voluntary assisted dying. In a strongly-worded opinion piece for the Herald Sun, Archbishop Comensoli noted that while US authorities had cancelled plans to livestream the execution of a convicted mass murderer, the execution itself would still proceed.

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Also reported by: *Geelong Advertiser*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *Cairns Post*, *The Mercury*, *Adelaide Now*, *Northern Territory News*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *The Courier Mail*

Thunderstorm Asthma Warnings Issued for Spring

Channel 7, Seven News, TV, 20 Oct 2026, Tim McMillan & Angela Tsun

Australians are being urged to prepare for a potentially deadly combination of thunderstorms and pollen this spring. Asthma Australia CEO Kate Miranda warned that these storm events are dangerous, with high pollen levels predicted following a wet winter. Experts advise people to carry puffers, prepare action plans, and seek indoor shelter before storms arrive.

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Similar coverage reported by: *Channel 7*

Start-up Develops Sound Wave Asthma Device

Channel 9, Nine News Late, TV, 20 Oct 2026, Michael Genovese

University of Melbourne start-up Misti has developed a digital inhaler that uses sound waves to improve asthma medication delivery and enable remote doctor monitoring. Prompted by high inhaler misuse rates among Australian patients, the technology aims to replace multi-puff routines with a single dose. Clinical studies begin next year, with regulatory approvals targeted for 2030.

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Pulse Partners with National Breast Cancer Foundation

News24, The Rita Panahi Show, TV, 20 Oct 2026, Rita Panahi

Pulse has partnered with the National Breast Cancer Foundation for Pink Pulse Month and Pink Ribbon Month, promoting support for breast cancer research. Consumers who purchase designated pink or raspberry Lightning Mini chargers are offered a complimentary pink cord. The initiative encourages contributions toward funding world-class research through partner product sales.

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Pharmacist Advises on Asthma Management and Medications

FIVEAA, Afternoons, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Leith Forrest

Interview with Star Discount Chemist chief pharmacist Shannon Hewitt about asthma medication techniques and allergy treatments. Hewitt explained that inhaling too forcefully on asthma puffers prevents medicine from reaching the lungs, recommending spacer devices and technique reviews. She also noted a shift toward dual-action prescription medicines that combine preventer and reliever properties to reduce risks from uncontrolled asthma.

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Mental Health Support for Breast Cancer Patients

2GB, Mornings, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Mark Levy

The Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation is highlighting the overlooked mental health challenges patients experience during treatment, post-treatment, and following an initial diagnosis. Listeners were encouraged to visit sbcf.org.au to offer support to the foundation as it addresses these psychological aspects of breast cancer care alongside routine awareness and fundraising efforts.

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Funding Concerns for Breast Cancer Counselling Programme

2GB, Mornings, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Mark Levy

In an interview with Renee Lopez, who is on the board of the Sydney Breast Cancer Foundation, she discussed funding concerns for a psychological support program delivered with Headway Health for breast cancer patients. She stated the self-funded initiative has expanded across 14 hospitals, calling for donations to maintain crucial mental health counselling amidst rising demand.

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Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Questions about alleged perpertrator go beyond extremism, to broken system

The Australian, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Natasha Robinson, Page 3

An allegedly targeted attack on a politician in Australia sends shockwaves through the community that go to the heart of the safe functioning of our country's democracy. [...] But the details that are emerging about the accused man, Brendan Nugent, also raise potential critical questions about mental healthcare in this country.

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Body of evidence: Why our circadian clock may be driving our depression

The Australian, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Penny Timms, Page 5

Australian researchers have identified a new depression subtype, dubbed "circadian depression", which they say is driven by biological changes in the body, rather than in the brain, and could help explain why traditional antidepressants fail some patients. The subtype is linked to a person's body clock and can be influenced by everything from light to seasonal changes and sleep-wake cycles.

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Also reported by: *The Australian*, *NEWS.com.au*, *Daily Mail UK*, *ABC Online*, *The Guardian*, *Canberra Times*, *West Australian*, *Shepparton News Online*, *Ballarat Courier*, *Warrnambool Standard*, *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser*, *Daily Mail UK*, *Bathurst Western Advocate*, *Northern Daily Leader*, *Illawarra Mercury*, *The Border Mail*, *Daily Liberal*, *The Senior*, *Newcastle Herald*, *Royal Australian College of General Practitioners*

Scrambled body clocks linked to new depression

Australian Financial Review, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Euan Black, Page 7

Australian researchers have identified a new subtype of depression driven by out-of-sync body clocks that could affect almost one in four people diagnosed with the mood disorder.

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The nerd with the first-aid kit

Age, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Carla Jaeger, Page 1

A trail of deleted social media posts from the man accused of attacking Helen Haines reveals years of serious psychological struggle as police warn of a dangerous link between extreme ideology and "mental health vulnerabilities". Brendan Nugent, 43, spoke of living with chronic pain as well as suicidal ideation and stays in psychiatric facilities.

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Also reported by: *Sydney Morning Herald*

Research may affect the way many people with depression are treated

Sydney Morning Herald, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Sarah Berry, Page 18

New Australian-led research, published today in The British Journal of Psychiatry, may fundamentally change the way many people with depression are treated. The study of 11,380 adults diagnosed with depression identified a new subtype caused by circadian rhythm disruption, called circadian depression.

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Also reported by: *Sydney Morning Herald*

Mum's cries are ignored

Northern Territory News, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Page 7

Women with post-partum psychosis are making repeated pleas for help before receiving a diagnosis. The first Australian study of their help-seeking experiences finds many contacted health services an average of seven times before getting the care they needed.

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Also reported by: *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*

'The best I've ever felt': Glendale mum shares her ADHD journey

Newcastle Herald, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Damon Cronshaw, Page 4

Amanda Keyes was officially diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Adhd) in July at age 51. "I only started medication six months ago. It was a bit late to get a diagnosis, but I've known my whole life," Ms Keyes, of Glendale, said.

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Also reported by: *Newcastle Herald*

Mental health, loneliness and loss: SBS Greek listeners share their stories

SBS, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Themi Kallos

Listeners of SBS Radio's Greek Language program had the opportunity to speak openly about mental health, loneliness and the challenges they face in life during a discussion held this October, which is dedicated to raising awareness of mental health in Australia.

Responding to our invitation, listeners from various parts of Australia called the program or sent text messages, sharing their thoughts and experiences.

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Immunisation

Measles vax rates tumble

Hobart Mercury, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Page 5

Routine vaccine program disruptions and underresourced health systems are driving a global decline in childhood measles vaccination rates post Covid. University of Queensland researchers examined measles cases, deaths and vaccine gaps in children under 5 across 204 countries from 1990 to 2023, finding estimated cases rose 40 per cent from 11.1 million in 2019 to 15.6 million in 2023.

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Also reported by: *Geelong Advertiser*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *Cairns Post*

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Health Systems Strategies

No relevant coverage.

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Health Economics & Research

Second life for pharma's secret research data

Australian Financial Review, Features, 22 Oct 2026, Sian Powell, Page 3

A new and powerful Australian artificial intelligence model can comb through data from confidential pharmaceutical trials both failed and successful to help big companies avoid wasting resources on already investigated dead ends.

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Groundbreaking hair follicle therapy offers new hope to reverse dementia

The Senior, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Phoebe Loomes

Research into a potential breakthrough treatment to reverse the symptoms of dementia could be in jeopardy, as planned budget cuts threaten to stifle Australian medical innovation. Dr Brendon Boot, neurologist and chief executive of S2N, said their research using hair follicles to stimulate new neuron growth had shown "extraordinary" early results.

Continue reading

Navigating the role of AI in home medicines reviews

Australian Pharmacist, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Peter Guthrey

It’s become commonplace for pharmacists to use artificial intelligence to draft emails and collate information, but how well can current AI tools help formulate Home Medicines Review (HMR) recommendations? Researchers from the University of Queensland gave five generative AI platforms (ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Claude, Google Gemini and Perplexity) two written, hypothetical HMR case vignettes and asked each to draft a letter to the patient’s GP, then assessed what the tools did – and didn’t – do well.

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First Nations Health

Cash for cultural sanctuary

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Page 3

Townsville First Nations women and Elders are set to gain a dedicated cultural sanctuary to reconnect and heal as part of a fresh $116,000 funding injection for regional Queensland community mental health projects. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation Maburra Collective has been named among 14 state recipients of the latest Australia Post Community Grants round.

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Calls grow for action on family and domestic violence in remote NT communities

ABC Online, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Victoria Ellis & Stewart Brash

There are increasing calls to improve safety and provide domestic, family and sexual violence services in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, after a 16-year-old girl was allegedly murdered in a domestic violence attack earlier this month. [...] "Aboriginal community-controlled health services are already responding to family violence alongside their core healthcare responsibilities, often in communities with very limited specialist support. That work needs dedicated resourcing."

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Also reported by: *National Indigenous Times*

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Public Hospital and Health Reform

Testing times for patients

Hobart Mercury, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Genevieve Holding, Page 15

Wait times for outpatients across Tasmania continue to worsen, with new data obtained by the Mercury showing urgent patients seeking an appointment at a neurology clinic have faced waits of up to 1340 days the highest level recorded in the past six months. Data supplied by the Department of Health to the Mercury shows indicative waiting times from February to July this year for outpatient clinics in the South, North and North West of the state broken up by urgent, semi-urgent or non-urgent patients.

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Our failing health system

Hobart Mercury, Editorials, 22 Oct 2026, Page 18

Tasmania's outpatient waiting lists are no longer just a measure of pressure on the health system. They are a measure of failure.

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Flying doctor leadership shift

Northern Territory News, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Lottie Hood, Page 13

New chief with much experience Weeks after the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) was awarded a $625 million contract in the NT, the service has announced a change in leadership for its "next chapter". Former

commissioner and chief executive of the NSW Ambulance Service, Dr Dominic Morgan AM ASM, has been announced as the new chief executive of the SA/NT branch.

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Also reported by: *Daily Telegraph Australia*, *Cairns Post*, *Geelong Advertiser*, *The Courier Mail*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, *Adelaide Now*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *The Mercury*, *Northern Territory News*

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Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office

No relevant coverage.

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Health Workforce

NT paramedics learn the ropes in wild rescue

Northern Territory News, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Lottie Hood, Page 11

Extreme heat, steep waterfalls and remote walking tracks these are just some of the unique aspects of the Northern Territory that can quickly go from beautiful to deadly when things go wrong. In recognition of this, the NT's ambulance service has launched its first remote access paramedic course to better equip frontline workers in meeting these tough challenges.

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Hospital delays likely amid strike

Warrnambool Standard, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Thomas Hanway, Page 4

Patients could soon have longer waits to get in and out of Warrnambool Base Hospital after striking workers rejected the latest pay offer from the state government. Allied health professionals in Warrnambool said the public could expect bed blockages because before midday each day, staff would not process new referrals, complete discharge planning, or NDIS reports, as they ramp up their industrial action.

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Also reported by: *Warrnambool Standard*

GPs can now diagnose ADHD in 'life-changing' move

Canberra Times, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Sarah Spina-Matthews

A general practitioner says her ability to personally diagnose and treat ADHD will be life-changing for some of her patients. Almost 300 GPs in NSW have completed training allowing them to diagnose attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, previously requiring a specialist.

Continue reading

Also reported by: *Ballarat Courier*, *West Australian*, *Kalgoorlie Miner*, *Warrnambool Standard*, *Daily Mail UK*, *The Senior*, *Bathurst Western Advocate*, *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser*, *The Border Mail*, *Illawarra Mercury*, *Northern Daily Leader*, *Daily Liberal*, *Newcastle Herald*, *Yahoo! News Australia*

CDU dismisses claims health school is out of funds and facing staffing issues

Northern Territory News, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Lottie Hood

Charles Darwin University has refuted claims that the School of Allied Health Sciences is in trouble saying the classes of 2,000 students are continuing as planned amid reports of budget and staffing issues. The Top End university's response follows after reports were made to this masthead claiming casual staff were being told to stop work immediately due to a lack of funds.

Continue reading

Also reported by: *Daily Telegraph Australia*, *Geelong Advertiser*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *The Courier Mail*, *Cairns Post*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *Adelaide Now*, *The Mercury*

Health Minister Ryan Park reveals major ADHD shake-up that could save NSW patients $1500 a year

7News.com.au, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Aimee Edwards

Hundreds of GPs across NSW can now diagnose and treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in a move the state government says will make care more accessible and affordable for patients and families. Almost 300 GPs have completed additional training to assess, diagnose, and begin prescribing medication for ADHD in both adults and children, potentially reducing long waits and costly appointments with specialists.

Continue reading

NSW GPs Trained to Diagnose ADHD

ABC Radio Sydney, Drive, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Thomas Oriti

Interview with Dr Ramya Raman, Vice President and President-elect of the Royal Australian College of GPs, about hundreds of New South Wales GPs becoming qualified to diagnose and treat ADHD. Raman explained that practising specialist GPs are undertaking a six-month state government training program to upskill in diagnosing ADHD and understanding concurrent conditions.

Play Now

Child and Youth Mental Health Nurses Strike

ABC Radio Hobart, Drive, AM Radio, 21 Oct 2026, Lucy Breaden/Kylie Baxter

Interview with Tammy Munro, Assistant State Secretary from the Health and Community Services Union, about child and youth mental health specialist nurses walking off the job. Munro said nurses staged a half-hour stop-work action seeking a pay offer and professional development allowances. She stated that without genuine offers, nurses risk leaving for other jobs or interstate.

Play Now

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Technology Assessment and Access

Would subsidising weight loss drugs make health care fairer?

The New Daily, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

GLP-1 medicines such as Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro have transformed the treatment of obesity, but access to them in Australia increasingly depends on something much less medical – whether you can afford them. Around half a million Australians are now using GLP-1 medicines.

Continue reading

PBAC supports 'long overdue' expansion to ADHD drug access

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Internet, 21 Oct 2026

GPs have welcomed a recommendation from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) to broaden PBS access to two attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) treatments as well as expanding who can initiate treatment. At the PBAC's September meeting, the committee recommended changes to PBS restrictions for non-stimulant drugs, atomoxetine and guanfacine, to allow subsidised use in patients who have 'tolerated, but not adequately responded to, stimulant therapy'.

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Medicare Benefits and Digital Health

Medical AI made safe and private

Australian Financial Review, Features, 22 Oct 2026, Paul Smith, Page 3

In a business world both obsessed with harnessing artificial intelligence to improve efficiency and performance and fearful of trusting unreliable platforms to perform important tasks, Orca Opti Software says it has threaded the needle with the perfect pitch for healthcare operators.

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Benefits Integrity

Banned Adelaide doctor Bill Tolis pleads guilty to importing steroids through Woodville medical clinic, other charges withdrawn

Adelaide Now, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Lucy Rutherford

A banned doctor has admitted to importing steroids after his clinic was raided by Australian Border Force (ABF) officers last year. Bill Tolis, 61, pleaded guilty in the Adelaide Magistrates Court on Wednesday to one count of importing Tier 1 goods.

Continue reading

Also reported by: *Northern Territory News*, *Cairns Post*, *Daily Telegraph Australia*, *Geelong Advertiser*, *The Mercury*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *The Courier Mail*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*

Aged care assistant's appeal win followed by permanent clinical ban

The Weekly Source, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Ian Horswill

An earlier disciplinary appeal win has not been the end of a Townsville aged care worker's case. Queensland's Office of the Health Ombudsman issued a prohibition order against Biju Akkamparambil on 16 October, permanently barring him from providing health services in a clinical capacity, paid or unpaid.

Continue reading

'If this lady gets an infection, I'll hunt you down': Surgeon suspended following outburst during operation

Australian Doctor, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Heather Saxena

An orthopaedic surgeon has been suspended after threatening to hunt down a team member and "piss in [their] mouth" when a non-sterile drape almost fell into a patient's wound. The Melbourne surgeon was also disqualified over his online abuse of two psychiatrists he claimed wrongly diagnosed him with bipolar disorder.

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Australian CDC

Pill tests fail to stop ODs

Daily Telegraph, General News, 22 Oct 2026, Mark Morri, Page 21

The first permanent NSW government-funded pill-testing system at a music festival has found dangerous levels of MDMA in some pills, while others were laced with cocaine and ketamine. Just over 250 people took their drugs to be analysed out of the 65,000 festival-goers at the Knockout Outdoor music festival at Sydney Olympic Park earlier this month.

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Also reported by: *Daily Telegraph Australia*, *Northern Territory News*, *Townsville Bulletin*, *The Mercury*, *Cairns Post*, *Geelong Advertiser*, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, *The Courier Mail*, *Adelaide Now*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*

Woman fighting for life as South Australia records sharp rise in meningococcal cases

7News.com.au, Internet, 21 Oct 2026, Lauren Thomson

A woman is fighting for life in hospital after contracting meningococcal disease as one state records a sharp increase in cases compared to the same time last year. The woman, aged in her 40s and from regional South Australia, has been diagnosed with invasive meningococcal disease serogroup B and remains in a critical condition.

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Therapeutic Goods Administration

TGA concerned AI scribes are doing more than just transcribing

Australian Doctor, Internet, 22 Oct 2026

A TGA review has found that eight AI scribes on the Australian market include functions likely to qualify them as medical devices, which means they would need to be formally registered with proof that they are safe to use. AI scribes have traditionally been regarded by regulators as doing nothing more than transcribing and providing summaries.

Continue reading

MS-2 Step change to make a real difference: sponsor

Australian Journal of Pharmacy, Internet, 22 Oct 2026, Megan Haggan

The TGA has extended the approved use of MS-2 Step (mifepristone and misoprostol) MS-2 Step is now approved for early medical abortion up to 70 days (10 weeks) of pregnancy, up from 63 days. It is also approved, for the first time, for the medical management of missed miscarriage up to 70 days.

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Office of Drug Control

No relevant coverage.

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Food Standards

No relevant coverage.

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AICIS

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