



# TODAY'S NEWS

Thursday, 21st December 2023

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## LINKS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **[The Australian \(page 6\)](#)** reports the Department of Health and Aged Care has 327 questions left unanswered from the latest rounds of Senate Estimates, but Government Services Minister Bill Shorten has rejected opposition criticism, accusing the Coalition of a mass of frivolous requests.
- **[The Courier Mail \(page 7\)](#)** reports patients were left waiting up to 60 hours after the emergency department of Brisbane's Mater Hospital was placed on bypass, paramedics have said.
- **[The Canberra Times \(Page 8\)](#)** reports that more than 35,000 Canberrans were on outpatient wait lists as of the end of October, with ACT Health Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith saying the wait times were in part due to specialist availability.
- **[The Herald Sun \(page 10\)](#)** reports some Victorians have dialled triple zero for more minor complaints after advice from their GPs saying they would get preferential treatment at hospital emergency departments if they arrived by ambulance.
- **[The Herald Sun \(page 13\)](#)** reports Victorians are being urged to avoid swimming in public pools if they have had diarrhoea in the past fortnight due to an outbreak of a chlorine resistant

parasite causing cryptosporidiosis, a type of gastroenteritis.

- **[The Courier Mail \(page 15\)](#)** reports private health funds have criticised Health Minister Mark Butler's decision to reject requests to raise premiums, saying the record rise was necessary to tackle inflationary pressure and upgrades to counter potential cyberattacks. *Also reported by: [Herald Sun](#), [Hobart Mercury](#), [Northern Territory News](#), [ABC Radio Darwin](#), [2SM](#), [4BC](#)*
- **[The Adelaide Advertiser \(page 1\)](#)** reports South Australia's chief psychiatrist will review the case of a man released from an intensive treatment order two days before he committed a random attack that ended in a fatality.
- **[ABC News](#)** reports that new GPs in South Australia will be offered \$10,000 sign-on bonus to work in key regional areas under a new four-year pay deal.
- **[ABC News](#)** reports that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has released new data on Australia's mortality rate, showing deaths at 6.1 per cent above expected levels, which represents a drop from the previous year's 14.1 per cent.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### Health funds' bid for 6pc hike denied

Courier Mail, General News, 21/12/2023, Courtney Gould, Page 15

Private health funds have hit back at the government after it rejected their request to deliver the biggest premium hike in at least six years. Health Minister Mark Butler declined the request from 31 insurers that could have seen an average increase of up to 6 per cent, insisting the funds come up with a more reasonable figure.

*Also reported by: [Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#), [Hobart Mercury \(Hobart\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Darwin\)](#), [Sky News Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Herald Sun \(Online\)](#), [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#).*

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### Priorities of health billions queried by Federal Health Minister

Aged Care Housing News, Other, 20/12/2023

Health Minister Mark Butler has declared the 24 per cent increase in commonwealth funding

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### Labor says 6pc price hike too much for health insurers

Aged Care Housing News, Other, 20/12/2023

Health Minister Mark Butler has rejected the health insurance industry's request to deliver the

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### The Health Wrap: learning to swim, why children in some countries are getting shorter, the new variant, climate questions – and seasons greetings

Croakey, Other, 20/12/2023, Melissa Sweet

Will the Albanese Government step up and do something meaningful to ensure affordable access to dental care for all Australians? What might the new COVID variant mean for the festive season? [...] I'm not aware of any comments from the Minister for Health, Mark Butler, in relation to this.

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### On private health insurance, a timely call to look beyond self-interest

Croakey, Other, 20/12/2023, Melissa Sweet

According to its website, Private Healthcare Australia represents 21 Australian health funds with a combined coverage of over 14.2 million Australians, or 98 percent of the sector on membership. [...] Now I don't know whether or not Minister Mark Mark Butler reads Croakey, but on 19 December the

ABC reported that he had "told private health insurers to have another go' after rejecting their bid to lift premiums by up to six percent".

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## Health insurers told to 'have another go' on premiums

HealthTimes, Other, 20/12/2023

The Albanese government is resisting pressure to markedly increase health insurance premiums in another looming cost-of-living blow to struggling Australian families. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said he wasn't inclined to approve the industry's proposed premium increase based on the information it had provided.

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## Health premiums tug-of-war

Medical Forum, Other, 20/12/2023

The Federal Government and private health insurers are in a tug-of-war over the next round of premium increases, with the industry pushing for more than usual to keep up with rising costs. Health Minister Mark Butler has reportedly poured cold water on industry attempts to secure an average premium rate hike of up to 6% which would have been the most substantial increase in six years.

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## Health insurers to hike premiums, saying they suffer 'highest prices' for medical devices

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 20/12/2023, Olivia Ireland

Private health insurance providers say they are suffering from inflationary pressures and the "highest prices in the world" from medical technology companies, criticising the federal government's decision to reject their initial request to increase premiums. Health Minister Mark Butler has declined the 31 insurers' proposed premium increase that could have delivered an average jump of up to 6 per cent as the companies and government hold annual negotiations to set the price

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

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## Federal MPs expenses on travel, printing revealed in pre-Christmas dump

West Australian, Other, 20/12/2023, Dan Jervis-Bardy

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his staff racked up almost \$685,000 in taxpayer-funded expenses in just three months, newly released figures reveal. WA's only cabinet minister, Madeleine King, had the highest bill among the State's MPs in that period, claiming almost \$320,000. [...] Liberal MP Jason Wood claimed almost \$255,000 in the three months – more than several cabinet ministers, including Chris Bowen, Mark Butler, Bill Shorten and Catherine King.

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## The YourLifeChoices Rorties – the galling behaviour that couldn't be overlooked

Your Life Choices, Other, 21/12/2023

According to the Australian Banking Association, there were 308,253 scams worth \$525 million in the 12 months to October 2023 – an average of 25,688 scams a month, worth \$43.8 million a month. [...] Health minister Mark Butler was not amused at the industry asking for an average 6 per cent increase in premiums.

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## ABC Radio Darwin , 07:00 News, 20/12/2023

Advocacy groups have backed the federal government's decision to push back against a bid from private health insurers for higher premiums next year. The proposed 6% increase was rejected by Health Minister Mark Butler, who called it unreasonable amid cost of living pressures.

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## 2SM, 11:00 News, 20/12/2023

Private health insurers are defending their bid to increase premiums. Health Minister Mark Butler has rejected an industry proposal from private health insurers to increase premiums by up to six-percent. Private health insurers are permitted one premium lift a year, and have blamed high inflation and increased costs of medical technology for the ambitious up to six-percent increase.

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## 4BC, 16:00 News, 20/12/2023

Private insurer insists hiking their premiums is necessary as inflation and cost of medical technology rises. Federal Health Minister Mark Butler has knocked back proposed increases from 31 insurance, which would see the prices jump from average of up to six percent. NIB chief executive Mark Fitzgibbon says they will continue to negotiate with the government.

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## MINISTER WELLS

### Waiting game no fun at all

Southern Highland News, General News, 20/12/2023, Cheryl Field, Page 21

And so another year draws to an end and we look forward to a new one - but unfortunately, it looks very much like bringing with it not-so-new problems. [...] Now Aged Care Minister Anika Wells tells us the new system will be introduced in two stages - Home Care Package clients from July 1, 2025, and home support program clients waiting a further two years, until July 1, 2027.

Also reported by: [Blayney Chronicle \(Blayney\)](#), [Eden Inlay Magnet \(Eden\)](#), [Oberon Review \(Oberon\)](#)

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### Aged care homes mostly improve after rating system introduced

9News, Other, 20/12/2023, Mikala Theocharous

More than 54 aged care homes remain a two-star rating or lower a year after the Aged Care Star Ratings came into effect, while most across the country have improved, according to the Minister for Aged Care. [...] "One year on and Star Ratings data shows that the Albanese Government is delivering its promise to lift the standard of aged care in Australia," minister for aged care Anika Wells said.

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### Star ratings show improved levels of aged care

Aged Health, Other, 20/12/2023

Offering access to previously unavailable data, star ratings provide a comprehensive view of aged care home performance. This helps older people, their families and carers compare like for like services and encourages providers to embrace a culture of continuous improvement. [...] Residents are reporting the quality of care they are receiving is getting better, with 95% of aged care homes now delivering acceptable, good or excellent care," said Anika Wells, Minister for Aged Care.

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## 2GB, Breakfast, 20/12/2023, Ben Fordham

Fordham points out that Minister Anika Wells have commented in one of the papers today in relation to aged care facilities, where she says its promising news that 54% of aged care facilities across the country have received a four out of five star rating. Fordham believes that 54% is not good enough.

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## 2GB, Breakfast, 20/12/2023, Ben Fordham

Fordham mentions that Aged Care Minister Anika Wells is spruiking the improvements in the aged care

sector, however, he adds that they are only praising 54% of the overall sector now that are delivering good or excellent care according to the Government's star rating system. He believes that 54% might pass to some people, but he doesn't believe that's an acceptable level, as its not quite closer to 100%.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

### **Fears paid parking on the cards for Wyong Hospital**

Coast Community Pelican Post, General News, 21/12/2023, Page 3

Community concerns that paid parking could be introduced at Wyong Hospital are escalating with the matter currently "under review" by the State Government. Federal MPs Gordon Reid (Robertson) and Emma McBride (Dobell) have urged the State Government to heed previous campaigns to keep the hospital free from parking fees.

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### **Fits the purpose**

Pharmacy Daily, General News, 20/12/2023, Page 1

The Federal Govt wants to ensure youth mental health service, headspace, is fit-for-purpose, appropriately resourced and wellintegrated with other services. The mental health of young people is declining, with almost 40% experiencing a mental disorder in the past 12 months, almost double the rate of mental ill health in the general population, the govt stated. Pharmacist and Assistant Health Minister Emma McBride said, "headspace is central to Australia's youth mental health service system and this investment builds on the work happening across the network".

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### **Fears paid parking on the cards for Wyong Hospital**

Coast Community News, Other, 20/12/2023, Terry Collins

Member for Dobell Emma McBride and Member for Robertson Gordon Reid are opposed to parking fees being introduced at Wyong Hospital Community concerns that paid parking could be introduced at Wyong Hospital are escalating with the matter currently "under review" by the State Government.

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### **Fits the purpose**

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 20/12/2023

The Federal Govt wants to ensure youth mental health service, headspace, is fit-for-purpose, appropriately resourced and well-integrated with other services. [...] Pharmacist and Assistant Minister Emma McBride said, "headspace is central to Australia's youth mental health service system and this investment gives us the opportunity to build on some of the great work happening across the network".

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### **NBN Central Coast, NBN News, 20/12/2023, Natasha Beyersdorf and Gavin Morris**

The Central Coast continues to feel the front of a nationwide GP shortage with local emergency departments seeing increased pressure, but relief is on the way, with Lake Haven today opening the doors to a new Medicare urgent care clinic. Federal Member for Dobell Emma McBride says measures have been taken to ensure a sufficient number of staff in the clinic.

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## ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCCARTHY

No relevant coverage

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## DEPARTMENT

### Officials leave 4441 questions unanswered

The Australian, General News, 21/12/2023, Rosie Lewis, Page 6

The Coalition is accusing Bill Shorten of "treating Australians like fools" after his department, Services Australia, failed to answer any of the 362 questions asked of it by deadline during the latest round of Senate estimates. [...] The Department of Health and Aged Care had 327 overdue questions and the Department of Education had 229 unanswered questions.

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

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### Feedback sought on new aged care Act

Australian Seniors News, Other, 20/12/2023

A new Act is being introduced in response to a recommendation by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Department of Health and Aged Care announced today. The Department says the new Act will put the rights and needs of older people at the centre of aged care.

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### Hats off to the APSC and its glass half full approach

PS News, Other, 20/12/2023, Chris Johnson

You've got to give it to the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) for its strategy of highlighting the positives of what has been a drawn-out and at times negative round of workplace bargaining. [...] "94.4 per cent of employees in the Department of Health and Aged Care who voted supported the new arrangements, with 76.8 per cent of employees participating in the agency's ballot.

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## CORONAVIRUS

### WHO declares JN.1 a COVID 'variant of interest'

Canberra Times, Other, 20/12/2023, Sriparna Roy

The World Health Organisation has classified the JN.1 coronavirus variant as a "variant of interest" but says current evidence shows its risk to public health is low. At least two experts told Reuters that while the variant can evade the immune system and transmit more easily than other circulating variants, it has not shown any signs of more severe disease.

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### JN.1 COVID strain declared new 'variant of interest' as cases rise

SBS, Other, 20/12/2023

There's no evidence the variant is more dangerous than previous coronavirus strains, experts say. The JN.1 strain is responsible for a growing number of COVID-19 infections.

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## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### Remaining elderly Byron Feros residents to stay on

Byron Shire Echo, General News, 20/12/2023, Page 7

The eight remaining residents will remain at Feros Village Byron Bay after it closes on January 29, 2024, with the Department of Health and Aged Care taking on responsibility for their care. The ABC reported last week the residents will remain at the facility.

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### Bupa Aged Care Pottsville Beach offering free accommodation for staff for up to six months

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 20/12/2023, Sam Stolz

A northern NSW aged care facility is giving workers a reprieve from Australia's dire housing crisis by offering six months rent-free accommodation – just minutes from a pristine beach. The Bupa Aged Care Pottsville initiative in the Tweed Shire comes as a "severe staffing shortage" impacts the aged care sector across northern NSW.

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

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### Channel 9, Today, 20/12/2023, David Campbell, Sylvia Jeffreys, Lara Vella

Hundreds of aged care residents are currently living in homes, requiring significant improvement. The government's latest star rating system has given 54 facilities across the country one or two stars.

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### 4BC, Afternoons, 20/12/2023, Bianca Stone

interview with Geoff Rowe, CEO, Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia. Stone says the Aged care star ratings are in for 2023, with six homes across the state needing significant improvement or improvement, according to the ratings they received a 1 or 2 stars out of five on the My Aged care site. Rowe mentions that the intention of the star rating is to empower older people to make a real decision about what the aged care facilities are doing behind the closed doors. He adds that those who have been given one or two stars have failed to comply with the requirements provided by the Aged Care Act.

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## POPULATION HEALTH

### Condoms for inmates row

Courier Mail, Edition Changes - Metro, 21/12/2023, Thomas Chamberlin, Page 9

Prison officers say they want body scanners and mouth swabs for prisoners before they agree to condoms being trialled in Queensland jails. The Courier-Mail last month revealed condoms could be introduced to jails for the first time in a bid to stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The rollout would align the state with others in Australia.

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### Gastro outbreak linked to public pools

Herald Sun, General News, 21/12/2023, Sarah Booth, Page 13

Gastro cases have spiked in Victoria as authorities warn multiple people have swum in public pools while infected with a chlorine-resistant parasite. An alert warned cryptosporidiosis cases had been

increasing in Victoria since September, with some people "infected after using public swimming pools".

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## Health alert: How to avoid gastro outbreaks this festive season

Ballarat Courier, General News, 21/12/2023, Melanie Whelan, Page 3

'Tis the season to be more diligent with hand-washing to prevent gastro outbreaks spoiling family festive fun. Grampians Health public health expert Rob Grenfell is urging families to be particularly careful in a season often marked by gastro, both viral and bacterial.

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## New STI stats prompt health plea

Daily Advertiser, General News, 21/12/2023, Dan Holmes, Page 3

Public health experts are concerned about a troubling rise in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) over the last 10 years. New research released by the Kirby Institute shows Australian diagnoses of gonorrhoea have doubled, while diagnoses of syphilis have tripled.

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## Call for action against alcohol harm

Launceston Examiner, General News, 21/12/2023, Isabel Bird, Page 8

Bottle shops next to supermarkets, breweries next to retail stores and wineries on the outskirts of town promising drinks with views. Pubs taking up space in the hearts of city centres and community sports clubs home to well-used bars.

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## Christmas warnings

Townsville Bulletin, General News, 21/12/2023, Caitlan Charles, Page 1

Health experts have issued multiple warnings ahead of Christmas in a bid to bring down emergency room presentations. North Queenslanders need to be mindful of food safety practices to avoid getting sick; be vigilant about certain toys they give kids; and be careful on the roads this Christmas.

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## Victorian health department warns of increase in cases of cryptosporidiosis, with some cases linked to public pools

7news.com.au, Other, 20/12/2023, Molly Magennis

'Swimmers can become infected when they accidentally swallow pool water contaminated with the parasite.' A health alert has been issued in Victoria following an increase in cases of a type of gastro — and some of the cases are linked to public swimming pools.

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## Drowning risk doubles over holiday period, beachgoers warned

9News, Other, 20/12/2023, Mikala Theocharous

Beachgoers have been urged to swim safely, with the risk of drowning known to double over the holiday period. Young adults aged between 16 to 39 are the highest risk demographic for drowning, with risk-taking behaviours, such as swimming at unpatrolled beaches driving the rate of drownings, according to Surf Lifesaving Australia (SLSA) data.

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## Australia's mortality rate is more than 6pc higher than expected, new Australian Bureau of Statistics report reveals

ABC Online, Other, 20/12/2023, Brianna Morris-Grant

Australia's excess mortality rate is sitting more than 6 per cent higher than expected. COVID-19 is still a "key contributor" to higher death rates as new data reveals Australia's nationwide mortality rate is sitting at more than six per cent higher than expected.

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## Chronic cough often a symptom of underlying health issue, needs investigation, doctors warn

ABC Online, Other, 20/12/2023, Neelima Choahan

Rebecca Dingle's daughter Lily first developed a cough when she was two and a half years old. But it was not until she was almost four that she finally got a diagnosis.

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## Plastics, pesticides and pills: how chemical exposures affect sperm health

The Guardian, Other, 20/12/2023, Adrienne Matei

Last year, a team of international researchers published a global review which revealed that sperm concentrations in semen have been freefalling for the last 50 years. From 1973 to 2018, sperm declined at a rate of 1.2% up to 2000, accelerating to 2.6% annually thereafter.

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## Having an IUD inserted is about to get a whole lot less painful

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 20/12/2023, Holly Berckelman

Of all the forms of contraception on offer to women, IUDs, particularly the hormonal kind (also known as the Mirena) have emerged as one of the favourites. Lasting up to eight years, the Mirena is reportedly over 99 per cent effective at preventing pregnancy – thanks to the lack of human error – and the best part is, it's a totally reversible form of contraception.

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

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## CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

### Married at First Sight star urges people not to ignore their symptoms after colon cancer diagnosis

ABC Online, Other, 20/12/2023

Mel Schilling, a public figure best known for her role in Nine reality show Married at First Sight, has encouraged people to be proactive about their health after being diagnosed with colon cancer. Schilling told followers of her Instagram account that she'd been told about the cancer last week and was having surgery to remove the 5 centimetre tumour. [...] Not all bowel cancers show symptoms, the Cancer Council says.

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### The warning signs of bowel cancer as MAFS expert Mel Schilling is hit with heartbreaking diagnosis just before Christmas

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 20/12/2023, Mary Mrad

Talitha Akamarmoi, from the NSW Central Coast, experienced symptoms of chronic fatigue and iron deficiency for about six months prior to the diagnosis. After requiring three iron transfusions she eventually had a colonoscopy that found a 'long' tumour in her large intestine causing the issues.

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### Cancer experts concerned as rate of diagnoses drops in major state

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 20/12/2023, Emilee O'Grady-Shorten

Cancer cases have gone missing in a major Australian state, causing alarm among experts that many cases may have gone undiagnosed. Recent statistics from the Victorian Cancer Council saw an unprecedented decline in reported cancer cases when compared to what was expected for 2022.

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

## PRIMARY CARE

### Outpatients still facing long wait times

Canberra Times, General News, 21/12/2023, Lucy Bladen, Page 8

Canberrans needing to access outpatient appointments in areas including general surgery, cardiology and gastroenterology are being faced with longer waits despite efforts to tackle waiting lists. There were more than 35,000 on the wait list at the end of October with waiting periods of more than four years in some specialties.

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### Hospital ED on bypass

Courier Mail, General News, 21/12/2023, Jackie Sinnerton, Page 7

Furious medics have revealed that the emergency department at the Mater Hospital Brisbane has been so overwhelmed the unit was placed on bypass amid claims patients had to wait up to 60 hours. An insider told The CourierMail the Queensland Ambulance Service was told not to drop patients at the struggling ED at 7pm on Tuesday. [...] The Australian Medical Association Queensland president Maria Boulton told The Courier-Mail there was more evidence around the increased demand for access to health care services.

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### Ambos are 'not taxis'

Herald Sun, General News, 21/12/2023, Sarah Booth, Page 10

Victorians are ringing triple-0 after GP visits under the wrong belief they will skip emergency departments queues, frustrated paramedics say, as they plead for callers and clinicians to stop using them as "taxis". [...] Royal Australian College of General Practitioners president Dr Nicole Higgins said she would be "very surprised" by GPs giving this advice, but the college does not have visibility over "every single" GP's actions and triple-0 should be for "emergencies only".

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### \$22m facility boosts RHH

Hobart Mercury, General News, 21/12/2023, Duncan Abey, Page 8

Construction of a \$22m pharmacy redevelopment, which will also house manufacturing facilities for jack jumper immunotherapy products, has begun at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Workers from Hutchinson Builders have started siteclearing and enabling works to deliver the Pharmacy Redevelopment Project, which will result in both a hospital pharmacy that meets statewide demand, and a sterile pharmaceutical production facility.

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### Health merger concerns

Border Mail, General News, 21/12/2023, Ted Howes, Page 1

Fears of Border medical services being merged have reignited following reports of a "secret plan" to revamp Victoria's health system. A Border region MP and health campaigners are concerned the plan could mean Albury-Wodonga "becomes an outpost for Goulburn Valley Health".

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### ED review past deadline, Labor says

Launceston Examiner, General News, 21/12/2023, Stephanie Dalton, Page 3

Labor is calling on the state government to be more transparent amid a growing delay in the Tasmanian Emergency Department review. Tasmania's House of Assembly supported a motion in September ordering Health Minister Guy Barnett to commission an independent review into the

Emergency Departments of all four major Tasmanian hospitals and implement an immediate action plan to address hospital bed block problems and relieve pressure on staff.

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## No ambulance available for Brisbane dad who was bleeding out

ABC Online, Other, 20/12/2023, Stephanie Zillman

On an ordinary Monday night in late October, 30-year-old Elliott Shaw was walking his dinner plate to the couch when he tripped on his daughter's toy and fell through the window next to it. "As soon as I looked down and saw the size of the wound and the blood starting to spurt, I knew the severity of it," Mr Shaw said.

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## More pain for maternity services

Medical Forum, Other, 20/12/2023

The closure of three maternity units in Perth in a matter of weeks has been linked to workforce shortages and a fall in demand for private hospital admissions. It has also prompted calls for improved Medicare funding for midwifery-led maternity services.

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## Pharmacists forced to dispense prescriptions 'by the light of a lantern' in Far North Qld

NEWS.com.au, Other, 20/12/2023

Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President Trent Twomey says pharmacists in the flood-affected regions of Far North Queensland have been forced to dispense prescriptions "by the light of a lantern". Far North Queensland is still undergoing a crisis after ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper wreaked havoc on the region causing major floods where many communities remain inundated.

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

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## ABC, 7:30, 20/12/2023, Laura Tingle

Across the country, there's a shortage of beds in public hospitals, which results to ambulances getting stuck in queues too often with their patients, which is something that's called "ramping". In Qld, the problem has become a political crisis for the Government.

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## ABC Radio Melbourne, Breakfast, 20/12/2023, Matt Tilley

Tilley points out that the Australian Medical Association said that the Royal Melbourne Hospital is spending close to \$2m a year, on top of all the other emergencies they have to deal with, in treating 256 people from e-scooter injuries.

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## ABC Radio Melbourne, Breakfast, 20/12/2023, Matt Tilley

Interview with Dr Sarah Whitelaw, Emergency Physician, Australian Medical Association, about around 256 people in a year being reported to be injured by e-scooters in a year at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and 70% of them being men. Whitelaw points out that according to their research they are seeing the injuries to occur to a lot of young men. She believes the reason could be that their demographic are the dominant demographic of those riding e-scooters and some of them are riding e-scooters while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and not wearing helmets.

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## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

### Health service had 'well-founded' reason to sack Canberra nurse caught sharing patient information, Fair Work Commissioner finds

ABC Online, Other, 20/12/2023, Harry Frost

A Canberra nurse sacked for sharing confidential patient information with a union has been awarded compensation, despite her employers having a "well-founded" reason for her dismissal. Carol Sandland sued Canberra Health Services (CHS) after she and several other workers were let go from the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit earlier this year

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## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Health jobs top pick for class of '23

Courier Mail, General News, 21/12/2023, Toby Crockford, Page 19

Queensland school leavers are taking advantage of the gaping holes in the state's workforce, with teaching, health and nursing degrees the top picks for today's tertiary offer round. Bond University domestic recruitment director Jit Loh believes the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) preferences show students reacting to future job trends, such as the state's health worker shortage.

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### Doctors offered \$10,000 bonus to move to regional South Australia to address rural GP shortage

ABC Online, Other, 20/12/2023, Emma Pedler and Arj Ganesan

John Williams says the new deal "is the start of a turnaround" to help attract doctors to rural settings. ABC Eyre Peninsula: Bernadette Clarke Several towns across South Australia will offer GPs up to \$10,000 in a bid to attract more doctors to regional areas under a new pay deal.

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### A country jackpot: cash incentive to lure GPs out bush

Canberra Times, Other, 20/12/2023, jacob shteyman

Doctors will be eligible for tens of thousands of dollars in cash incentives if they move out bush in a bid to plug chronic GP shortages in the regions. A \$10,000 one-off payment will be offered to doctors who move to 32 country towns in South Australia, including Renmark on the River Murray and the wine country town of Clare, to set up practice or work in a hospital.

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### \$10k sweetener to settle: The plan to lure doctors to regional SA

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 20/12/2023, Brad Crouch

Dozens of country towns will offer new GPs a \$10,000 welcome under a new pay deal with the state government. While remote towns now offer up to \$50,000 as a signing on deal, another 32 rural towns will offer the new payment of up to \$10,000 to encourage new doctors to settle, including Mount Pleasant, Kapunda, Eudunda, Barmera, Meningie, Mannum, Renmark, Waikerie, Bordertown, Kingston, Millicent, Penola, Clare, Wallaroo, Peterborough, Laura, Port Broughton, Crystal Brook, Jamestown, Quorn and Hawker.

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

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## New bonuses for rural GPs

In Daily, Other, 20/12/2023, Charlie Gilchrist

Doctors setting up practice in rural South Australia will be paid up to an extra \$10,000 on top of the \$50,000 already offered to GPs who move to the country, the state government says. Additionally, doctors already operating in regional areas who sign up for the agreement will receive an extra \$5,000, while there will also be a 3 per cent increase to sessional rates.

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## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

### Broaden PBS dispensing

Pharmacy Daily, Other, 20/12/2023

The Pharmacy Guild Qld branch President Chris Owen is calling on the Govt to broaden continued dispensing arrangements to include all PBS-subsidised medicines for residents impacted by the current disaster in Far North Queensland. "As medicines experts, patients should be able to access all PBS subsidised medicines from their local community pharmacist during a disaster, and we are calling on the Albanese Govt to expand the list of medicines available under the National Health (Continued Dispensing) Determination 2022 to include all PBS-subsidised medicines for patients in the North," said Owen (pictured).

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## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

### myGov to be single entry portal after agencies told to get on board

Australian Financial Review, Other, 20/12/2023, Tom Burton

People will be able to access federal services through a single portal, after the Albanese government agreed to mandate all agencies to migrate their citizen services to the myGov platform. The decision to make myGov the primary entry for all major Austra...

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## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### Health freed killer

Adelaide Advertiser, General News, 21/12/2023, Riley Walter;, Page 1

South Australia Health released the man accused of randomly killing a woman and leaving another fighting her life two days before the alleged violence spree. The women were stabbed yesterday at a Plympton real estate firm.

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## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

### 2GB, Mornings, 20/12/2023, Ray Hadley

Hadley says that new smoking statistics have been revealed today with researches from the University of Melbourne, Monash University, and the University of Queensland, surveying more than 8000 people

who smoke at least once daily. He adds that it's been revealed that 70% of smokers want to try to quit in the next 1 to 2 years, only 22% want to keep smoking and 8% are unsure from the 70% of smokers that want to throw in the towel, 14% would like to switch to an alternative nicotine replacement like vaping, while 57% said that they want to quit altogether.

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## SPORT

No relevant coverage

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## HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

### **Gina Rinehart says federal taxation revenue from mining more than covers the salaries of all of Australia's police, teachers and nurses. Is that correct?**

ABC Online, Other, 20/12/2023

Australia's richest woman Gina Rinehart is a passionate advocate of the benefits that mining and farming has brought to Australia. In a November 21 article written for Sky News, she extolled the legacy of miners and farmers and noted: "Federal taxation revenue from our mining companies alone for the last financial year more than covers the cost of salaries of all of Australia's police, teachers and nurses."

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### **Channel 10, The Project, 20/12/2023, Sarah Harris, Waleed Aly and Sam Taunton**

Adelaide researchers are working on a new cell therapy which could delay or even prevent type one diabetes. They say it could change lives. More than 130,000 Australians are affected by the disease and researchers are trying to grow cells that will help switch off the process that starts type one diabetes.

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### **Channel 10, 10 News First, 20/12/2023, Sandra Sully**

A new cell therapy is being developed which could delay and even prevent type-1 diabetes. According to the Australian researchers that are working on the treatment, this could change lives, with clinical trials currently underway. Additionally, a \$60,000 grant from Diabetes Australia will allow researchers to take their study to the next phase

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### **Channel 7, Seven News, 20/12/2023, Mark Ferguson**

Australian scientists have discovered a new way to detect breast cancer, making the process faster, cheaper and more accurate namely called NanoMslide. The technology changes the colour of cancer cells so they can easily be seen under a microscope.

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## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### **Indigenous mental health peak wants support for young mob reeling**

## from Voice defeat

National Indigenous Times, Other, 20/12/2023, Jarred Cross

Australia's national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, and suicide prevention is warning of the effects left in the wake of the Voice referendum. Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia has called on the Government to make an immediate and genuine commitment to addressing remaining impacts endured by First Peoples - particularly younger generations.

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## Mullewa healing forum helps put the spotlight on self-care for Indigenous people

West Australian, Other, 20/12/2023, Anna Cox

A forum aiding awareness of Indigenous care and healing has been held in Mullewa, with 190 participants attending the two-day event. Aboriginal staff from the WA Centre for Rural Health of the University of Western Australia worked with Mullewa community leaders to co-design the forum for two years.

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## OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

### Disaster debacle

Courier Mail, General News, 21/12/2023, Madura McCormack , Page 1

A federal government scheme established to keep a lid on insurance premiums in the state's north has spectacularly failed its first test due to fine print that means it only applies for 48 hours after a cyclone. Most of the weekend's flooding in the Far North came on Sunday and into Monday, but ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper that brought the downpour was downgraded to a tropical low overnight Wednesday - so the \$10bn insurance scheme had expired by Saturday.

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### Canberra is moving at a 'snail's pace' in helping flood victims of Far North Qld

The Australian, Other, 20/12/2023

Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President Trent Twomey says Canberra is moving at a "snail's pace" in helping the flood victims of Far North Queensland. Far North Queensland is still undergoing a crisis after ex-Tropical Cyclone Jasper wreaked havoc on the region causing major floods where many communities remain inundated.

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### 'Protect yourself': mosquito health warning issued for the Hunter

Newcastle Herald, Other, 20/12/2023, Damon Cronshaw

Hunter New England Health has urged people to protect themselves from mosquito bites, amid fears of The warning coincided with a forecast of rain for three days in the Hunter, which increases the mosquito threat. Dr David Durrheim said can carry and spread viruses that lead to serious illness, but precautions can be taken to avoid bites.

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### Mozzie virus warning

Shepparton News Online, Other, 20/12/2023, Adrienne Hartnett

Widespread flooding and record rainfall, driven by a third consecutive La Nina in 2022, is attributed to the cause of recent cases of mosquito borne viruses such as Japanese encephalitis in last two years. In the wake of recent diagnoses of mosquito-borne viruses, border residents and visitors to the region

are being urged to take precautions to protect themselves against these potentially serious illnesses this festive season.

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## Study is crunching the numbers on Murray Valley encephalitis

Shepparton News Online, Other, 20/12/2023

A voluntary surveillance study is under way to detect the prevalence of Murray Valley encephalitis in the Greater Shepparton and Moira communities. This initiative, conducted by the Victorian Department of Health and the Goulburn Valley Public Health Unit, aims to understand the extent of MVE exposure in regional communities and which people are most likely to become infected.

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## Fight the bite as Ross River detected

Shepparton News Online, Other, 20/12/2023, Adrienne Hartnett

Mick Humphreys contracted Japanese Encephalitis in March 2022 despite being extra cautious. Now, he's advocating for locals and visitors to be vigilant again this summer.

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## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

### Popular Bondi Sands SPF50+ sunscreen products recalled

7news.com.au, Other, 20/12/2023, Hayley Taylor

Two batches of products by popular skincare brand Bondi Sands have been recalled. The SPF50+ products for the face and body may not provide consumers with any protection from UV rays, due to an issue with the medicinal ingredients in the lotions. [...] "When (the fluid splits), the medicinal ingredients that prevent sunburn are not properly mixed and when applied, the products may not offer the same protection," the Therapeutic Goods Administration said.

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### Popular sunscreen sold in Woolworths and Coles is urgently recalled

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 20/12/2023, Ashley Nickel

Two sunscreen products from Bondi Sands have been urgently recalled as they may offer no sun protection. Two batches of the brand's Bondi Sands Mineral Zinc Sunscreen SPF50+ range were recalled by the Therapeutic Goods Administration on Wednesday.

[Read More](#)

### Popular Bondi Sands sunscreen urgently recalled over fears it offers no protection

Yahoo! News Australia, Other, 20/12/2023, Tom Flanagan

A sunscreen sold across Australia has been urgently recalled over fears it won't protect users from the sun. Popular brand Bondi Sands said it "sincerely regrets" the inconvenience caused to its customers after two versions of its Mineral Zinc Sunscreen were recalled following instruction from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

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## OFFICE FOR DRUG CONTROL

### 'We have failed them'

Canberra Times, General News, 21/12/2023, Steve Evans, Page 1



Sixty-four people - three quarters of them men - have died of drug overdoses at Australian music festivals since 2000. Much more needs to be done to combat the risk-taking that has led to so much tragic loss, a new study shows.

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## FOOD STANDARDS

### **ABC Radio Darwin , Breakfast, 20/12/2023, Amber Irving-Guthrie**

High sugar foods and drinks will no longer be able to use the term "No added sugar on packaging", following changes to Australia's food standards. The food safety regulator Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has decided to crack down on packaged products that use that phrase, and they'll now be required to show the total sugars in the product.

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## AICIS

### **5AA, Mornings, 20/12/2023, Matthew Pantelis**

The Commonwealth this year has settled a \$132.7m class action over PFAS contamination right across Australia. The sites were mainly defence bases where firefighting foam was used.

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