



# TODAY'S NEWS

Sunday, 25th February 2024

[Minister Butler](#) | [Minister Wells](#) | [Assistant Minister McBride](#)  
| [Assistant Minister Kearney](#) | [Assistant Minister McCarthy](#) | [Department](#)  
| [Coronavirus](#) | [Ageing and Aged Care](#) | [Population Health](#)  
| [Cancer, Hearing and Chronic Conditions](#) | [Primary Care](#)  
| [Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#) | [Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office](#)  
| [Health Workforce](#) | [Technology Assessment and Access](#)  
| [Medicare Benefits and Digital Health](#) | [Benefits Integrity](#)  
| [Health Systems Strategies](#) | [Sport](#) | [Health Economics and Research](#) |  
[First Nations Health](#) | [Office of Health Protection and Emergency Management](#)  
| [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) | [Office for Drug Control](#) | [Food Standards](#)  
| [AICIS](#)

## LINKS

[Click here to view full print articles in this report](#)

[Click here to view front pages of today's newspapers](#)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Sunday Canberra Times \(page 1\)](#) reports that ACT Health Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith has called for the ACT to be classified as a regional area rather than a metropolitan area to boost bulk-bill rates. A review into how to nationally distribute doctors more equitably will be finalised in the middle of the year, with Federal Health Minister Mark Butler to say more after its release.
- The [Sunday Age \(page 1\)](#) reports that the total number of Victorian GP clinics that offer full bulk-billing has fallen by 107 clinics across 2023, with the largest dips in the electorates of Menzies, Fraser, Chisholm, Gorton, Hotham and Calwell.
- The [Sun Herald \(page 1\)](#) reports that some authorities are surveilling meat produce for antimicrobial resistance and comes as calls surface for more transparency in antibiotic usage in agriculture. A 2024 study from the University of Canberra found that 81 per cent of tested NSW and ACT pork and meat products were resistant to antibiotics and a further 12 per cent were "superbugs".
- The [Sunday Herald Sun \(page 1\)](#) reports that the Victorian government is considering implementing a state-wide pill testing trial for medical centres; however, the trial will not include

facilities at music festivals.

- **The ABC (online)** reports that the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has warned that testimonials by social media users to advertise egg freezing violate national advertising law.

## MINISTER BUTLER

### Take a scalpel to the health funds' tricks

Sunday Telegraph, Business News, 25/02/2024, Scott Pape, Page 96

Federal Health Minister Mark Butler wants you to know that he has balls of steel. You see, each year private health insurers must go cap in hand to him to increase their prices. And this year they wanted to deliver their biggest premium hike in six years -but he rejected it. Bam! Instead he'll soon announce that he's allowing a much smaller increase in your annual private health insurance premium.

Also reported by: [Sunday Territorian \(Darwin\)](#), [Sunday Mail Adelaide \(Adelaide\)](#), [Sunday Telegraph \(Sydney\)](#), [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Sunday Tasmanian \(Hobart\)](#), [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#).

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

### Bulk-billing rates dive as GPs charge for services

Sunday Age, General News, 25/02/2024, Natassia Chrysanthos, Page 1

Patients in Victoria have 107 fewer fully bulk-billing GP clinics than a little over a year ago, as more doctors in the middle- and lower-income suburbs of Melbourne start charging gap fees. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said his government's investment had led to 360,000 more bulk-billed trips to the GP, with the greatest impact in regional areas.

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

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

### MPs silent on GP relief ACT wants rural GP incentives restored

Sunday Canberra Times, General News, 25/02/2024, Lucy Bladen and Miriam Webber, Page 1

The ACT's federal Labor politicians have refused to weigh in on restoring rural bulk billing incentives to the territory, as new data reveals Canberrans are paying more to see a doctor. [...] She said that she had repeatedly raised this with the former Morrison government and with federal Health Minister Mark Butler.

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

### Doctors push for expanded bulk-billing as patients feel the pinch of cost-of-living pressures

ABC Online, Other, 24/02/2024, Grace Burmas

A West Australian man whose chronic illness has impacted his ability to earn an income was forced to beg his doctor to bulk-bill a consult, with one doctor saying unaffordable health care is putting patients at risk of getting sicker. [...] Health Minister Mark Butler said the national bulk-billing rate rose by 2.1 percentage points in the first two months of the initiative.

[Read More](#)

### Overhaul of melanoma detection could help high-risk patients

Sydney Morning Herald, Other, 24/02/2024, Henrietta Cook and Clay Lucas

A program trying to harness artificial intelligence (AI) to overhaul the way melanomas are detected in high-risk Australians is being considered by the Albanese government. [...] Federal Health Minister Mark Butler also this week confirmed that the Department of Health is looking at how technology such as AI and genomics can be used in future screening programs.

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

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## MINISTER WELLS

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCBRIDE

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER KEARNEY

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## ASSISTANT MINISTER MCCARTHY

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## DEPARTMENT

### **The search for superbugs lurking in your shopping trolley**

Sun Herald, General News, 25/02/2024, Carrie Fellner, Page 1

Authorities are testing for dangerous antimicrobial resistant bacteria in chicken, pork and beef from supermarkets, amid mounting global concerns about the spread of the bugs in the food supply. It comes as experts have warned a veil of secrecy over antibiotic usage on Australian farms risks damaging our international standing, as key trading partners drastically curb their own usage of the drugs. [...] Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is funding the two-year survey.

Also reported by: [Sunday Age \(Melbourne\)](#).

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

### **The care factor failure**

Sunday Territorian, General News, 25/02/2024, Julie Cross and Annabel Fleming, Page 9

One resident was left in almost constant pain for four days, another suffered 12 falls in eight months, and a vegetarian struggling with weight loss was served a meat dinner all at one aged-care home that has dropped more than 100 places in the official government ratings. [...] A News Corp analysis of the Department of Health and Aged Care's past two quarterly star ratings has identified the aged-care homes in each state that have had the biggest drop.

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

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

[Back to Top](#)

## CORONAVIRUS

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## AGEING AND AGED CARE

### Parents deserved so much better

Sunday Territorian, General News, 25/02/2024, Julie Cross, Page 9

Debbie Martin will never be at peace with the way her parents suffered in aged care during their last few years. She said she saw no improvement in the sector from when her dad, John, 96, a World War II veteran, died in a nursing home in 2016, to when her mother, Carlene, 86, a seamstress, passed away in a different facility last year.

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

[Back to Top](#)

## POPULATION HEALTH

### Vaping hits health cost

Sunday Territorian, General News, 25/02/2024, Page 5

Vaping could ultimately cost the Australian health system more than \$180m each year. QIMR Berghofer researchers found at least \$180m a year will be needed to treat increased numbers of people with respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Also reported by: [The Australian \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#), [Daily Telegraph Australia \(Online\)](#), [The Courier Mail \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#)

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

### Samantha Murphy case cements female runners' safety fears as more opt to exercise in groups

ABC Online, Other, 24/02/2024, Georgia Lenton-Williams

Extensive searches of the Canadian Plantation area where Ms Murphy often went for regular runs have so far found no trace of the 51-year-old mother of three. [...] Dr Iliadis cited data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which showed one in five women and more than one in 15 men had experienced stalking since the age of 15.

[Read More](#)

### Risks of 'free birthing' in spotlight after death of premature twins in NSW

SBS, Other, 24/02/2024, Amy Hall and Sydney Lang

The premature death of twins in New South Wales linked to an apparent free birth has raised fresh concerns about the practice. [...] Data is not collected on freebirths in Australia, but the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare does note the majority (97 per cent) of births occur in hospitals, 1.8 per cent of women give birth in birth centres, and 0.3 per cent at home.

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## CANCER, HEARING AND CHRONIC CONDITIONS

### Hope for rare childhood diseases

Sunday Age, General News, 25/02/2024, Mary Ward, Page 10

When Megan Maack's two children were diagnosed with a rare genetic condition causing childhood dementia in 2013, research teams overseas had a drug that could dramatically slow the disease's progress. But it took years for the drug to be developed to a clinical grade, and it is extremely difficult to enrol in trials of such drugs when they are held abroad.

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

## Hope in prostate toolkit

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 25/02/2024, Brad Crouch, Page 26

A new online tool aims to cut through the confusion around prostate cancer for newly diagnosed men and their families. The Prostate Cancer Foundation's new Survivorship Toolkit is a one-stop shop for information about Australia's most common cancer. Many of the 250,000 Australian men dealing with the cancer are expected to benefit, with the app offering comprehensive facts, advice and expert nursing services.

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

## Gold Coast Bulletin Swimmers' naked ambition to raise funds for brain cancer research

Gold Coast Bulletin, Other, 24/02/2024, Madeline Crittenden

A pet scan for your whole body has opened in an Australian first, which will "advance science and technology" and "improve healthcare" for Australians, Michael Crouch Chair in Child and Youth Mental Health Professor Adam ... Guastella says. The positron emission tomography scan has the ability to minimise scanning time and drive advancements in cancer research and neurological disorders.

[Read More](#)

## Skills boost offer for cancer nurses

Sunraysia Daily, Other, 24/02/2024, Wade Stephens

Registered nurses in Mildura's cancer centre and clinics are being encouraged to apply for a Rotary scholarship, to pay for a Graduate Certificate in Cancer Nursing. In collaboration with Myeloma Australia, the Rotary Club of Camberwell has come to Mildura to promote scholarships to upskill nurses as a means of addressing blood cancer survival rates in regional areas, and survival rates from cancer more broadly.

[Read More](#)

## Living with cystic fibrosis: Bradley thought his life was over at 18. He penned his own eulogy. Then, he defied odds

7news.com.au, Other, 24/02/2024, Olivia Scott

'We were told my diagnosis would ruin my life. Instead it became my super power.' Bradley Dryburgh thought his life was over before it had truly begun. The 27-year-old, from Wollongong, has been living with cystic fibrosis (CF) all his life — having been diagnosed with the lung-damaging genetic illness at just three weeks old.

[Read More](#)

## Family wants better cancer medicine after losing Emily

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 24/02/2024

Oncology patient Emily Borg was cancer-free when she died aged five. Her immune system had been obliterated by the treatment designed to save her life, so when she caught a rare fungal infection weeks after, her body could not fight it off. The best available anti-fungal was not approved for use in children, and even if Emily's doctor applied for use on compassionate grounds it was likely to be rejected.

Also reported by: [Canberra Times \(Online\)](#), [West Australian \(Online\)](#), [Newcastle Herald \(Online\)](#), [7news.com.au \(Online\)](#), [Northern Daily Leader \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## PRIMARY CARE

### Doctor-assisted suicide may prove to be a very slippery slope

Sunday Telegraph, General News, 25/02/2024, Peta Credlin, Page 19

The trouble with changing the law to permit doctor-assisted suicide for terminally ill people is that it soon becomes a slippery slope for anyone tired of life to be facilitated to end it. Euthanasia starts as a good way to ease the pain of patients in their death agonies and is then steadily extended to anyone with a terminal illness, a debilitating condition, or even chronic depression.

Also reported by: [Sunday Mail Brisbane \(Brisbane\)](#), [Sunday Herald Sun \(Melbourne\)](#).

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

## Bulk billing in free fall

Sunday Mail Adelaide, General News, 25/02/2024, Brad Crouch, Page 21

Bulk billing rates for non-concession card adult consultations went into free fall in South Australian federal electorates between 2022 and 2023, new data indicates. However, one electorate which had zero clinics bulk billing such consultation in 2022 now has one. A national survey by Cleanbill, which contacted 6818 GP clinics, checked the bulk billing rates for a standard adult consultation during normal weekday office hours.

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

## Bulk billing and the cost of living longer

Sunday Mail Brisbane, Editorials, 25/02/2024, Page 64

Queenslanders are struggling with the spiralling cost of living more than ever - and losing more than 100 bulk billing medical clinics across the state in the past year certainly does not help. The shock new data, revealed in today's Sunday Mail, contributes to rising fears that Queenslanders will avoid doctor check-ups entirely and miss out on lifesaving medications.

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

## Shattered, wait-listed

Sunday Territorian, General News, 25/02/2024, Alex Treacy, Page 1

Last month, Palmerston woman Tiffany Kelly, 33, an early childhood educator and single mother of two, got the shakes. She hasn't been able to stop since. If it were just the shakes, she possibly could have continued being a mum to Kaiden, 3, and Annelise, 8, and kept up her job at Zuccoli Early Learners.

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

## North Queensland bulk billing: Clinics remove subsidies, costs go up

Daily Telegraph Australia, Other, 24/02/2024, Blair Jackson

Fewer North Queensland GPs have bulk billing than a year ago and out-of-pocket costs to visit the doctor have gone up. Health directory Cleanbill has collected pricing and availability data of GPs and all other healthcare practices across Australia, and a new electorate breakdown report shows a dip in services in North Queensland. Across the Dawson, Herbert and Kennedy federal electorates, there are 114 GP clinics taking new patients, split almost exactly evenly in each electorate.

Also reported by: [Gold Coast Bulletin \(Online\)](#), [Northern Territory News \(Online\)](#), [The Mercury \(Online\)](#), [Geelong Advertiser \(Online\)](#), [Adelaide Now \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

## Changing of the guard at the Canberra Hospital Foundation

Canberra Times, Other, 24/02/2024, Megan Doherty

They look like sisters, are both lawyers and share a passion for Canberra and helping those in need. When Deborah Rolfe decided to stand down as chair of the Canberra Hospital Foundation after almost 13 years in the volunteer position, her replacement was announced as deputy chair Susan Proctor.

[Read More](#)

## Gold Coast Bulletin 100 bulk-billing clinics close: Queenslanders paying more for GPs than anywhere in nation

Gold Coast Bulletin, Other, 24/02/2024, Jackie Sinnerton

GPs are pushing for a \$16 increase in the Medicare rebate to cover the cost of longer consultations and reverse the decline in bulk billing. Doctors will also push for taxpayers to fund \$75 million worth of

incentives to attract more medical graduates to choose a career in primary care. Only 13 per cent of graduates are choosing to become GPs.

[Read More](#)

## 'Threat to services': record state hospital shortfall nears \$1.5 billion

Warrnambool Standard, Other, 24/02/2024, Ben Silvester

Victoria's hospital system has entered uncharted territory, plunging further into the red than ever before, prompting serious concerns about staff cuts, longer wait times, and access to care. Internal Department of Health figures, sighted by The Standard, showed the state's public hospitals were \$1.46 billion in deficit in the six months to December 2023, with every single regional health service recording a shortfall, including Warrnambool's South West Healthcare which was \$16.62 million in the red.

[Read More](#)

## Hundreds of universal bulk-billing GP clinics missing in action

Australian Doctor, Other, 24/02/2024, Carmel Sparke

Over 450 fully bulk-billing clinics closed or switched to charging some patients out-of-pocket fees in the past year, an analysis reveals. The analysis, conducted by The Guardian, was based on data from Healthdirect which lists GP practices across Australia. The media outlet said compared to 12 months ago, some 114 fully bulk-billing clinics were no longer on the register because their names had been removed, possibly because they had closed down.

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICE

### ABC News, Weekend Breakfast, 24/02/2024, Kathryn Robinson and Dan Bouchier

Interview with Alison Weatherstone, Chief Midwife, Australian College of Midwives. Robinson says anecdotal evidence suggests free or wild birthing, which is the practise of giving birth without medical assistance or a midwife, has increased since Covid and has some in the medical profession sounding alarm bells. Weatherstone points out that they are seeing a rise in free birthing or wild birthing across Australia and internationally. She adds that three percent of women are choosing home birth.

[Play Now](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH WORKFORCE

### Gender pay gap stretches to \$6205

Sun Herald, General News, 25/02/2024, Mary Ward, Page 19

The gender pay gap among NSW public sector employees reached a decadehigh divide last year, as wage rises in male-dominated industries such as transport outpaced those for nurses and teachers. Men employed by the state government had a median salary 6.2 per cent or \$6205 - higher than the median salary for women, according to data tabled in state parliament this month.

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

## Peninsula Health appeals Federal Court decision ruling it breached Fair Work Act by underpaying its junior doctors

Northern Territory News, Other, 24/02/2024, Aisling Brennan

A hospital that failed to pay more than 1500 junior doctors for overtime is appealing the historic class action, in a fresh blow for workers. A doctor owed more than \$8000 in overtime is "extremely disappointed" her former employer is refusing to pay her back despite a historic class action win over wage theft in the Federal Court.

[Read More](#)

## Illawarra gets 10 new GPs from UK, Malaysia to help with doctor shortage

Illawarra Mercury, Other, 24/02/2024, Kate McIlwain

Five new overseas GPs are already treating Illawarra patients and another five are on their way, as part of a federal government push to ease the region's doctor shortage. The Illawarra's two federal Labor MPs said the latest new incoming International Medical Graduates (IMGs) from the UK and Malaysia would begin full-time by July 2024.

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## MEDICARE BENEFITS AND DIGITAL HEALTH

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## BENEFITS INTEGRITY

### Vanessa De Bruyns covid vaccine appeal dismissed in Industrial Relations Commission

Cairns Post, Other, 24/02/2024

A Sunshine Coast nurse who refused to get a mandatory vaccine amid claims she had "life threatening drug adverse reactions" has made a desperate plea to overturn her suspension from her work. A Sunshine Coast clinical nurse who made a "plea for her livelihood, profession, health and mental wellbeing" after she refused to get the mandated covid vaccine has lost her fight to appeal her without-pay suspension.

Also reported by: [Toowoomba Chronicle \(Online\)](#), [Sunshine Coast Daily \(Online\)](#).

[Read More](#)

### Fertility services using social media influencers to promote egg freezing could be breaching national advertising laws

ABC Online, Other, 24/02/2024, Shari Hams and Eric Tlozek

The use of social media influencers to advertise egg freezing — part of a boom in fertility services aimed at healthy young women — may breach Australia's Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, the federal watchdog has warned. Testimonial advertising for regulated health services is prohibited in Australia, but the promotion of egg freezing is a "complex area", according to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), as some elements of the process are "regulated health services" while others are not.



[Read More](#)

## ABC News, Weekend Breakfast, 24/02/2024, Kathryn Robinson and Dan Bouchier

Influencer advertising in social media is part of a boom in fertility services aimed at young women. It comes as the National health regulator Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency [APHRA] saying that some of these social media content may be breaching the law.

Similar content in: [ABC News \(Sydney\)](#), [ABC \(Sydney\)](#).

[Play Now](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH SYSTEMS STRATEGIES

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## SPORT

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## HEALTH ECONOMICS AND RESEARCH

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

### Walker inquest continues probing police sergeant

The New Daily, Other, 23/02/2024, Neve Brissenden and Kumanjaya Walker, Zachary Rolfe

Police training, mental health and allegations of excessive force are being interrogated at a coronial inquest into the fatal police shooting of Indigenous teenager Kumanjaya Walker. The inquest into Walker's death resumed on Thursday for a final time in Alice Springs, more than 18 months after it began.

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## OFFICE OF HEALTH PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

### Plan for pill test

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 25/02/2024, Shannon Deery, Page 1

Pill testing could be introduced across Victoria as part of broader drug reforms that could replace the provision of a second injecting room in Melbourne. The Sunday Herald Sun can reveal that plans for the second injecting room have stalled as the Allan government instead considers other changes.

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

### Measles alert for Wagga after confirmed case in returned overseas

## traveller

Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser, Other, 24/02/2024, Andrew Pearson

A measles alert has been issued for Wagga after a confirmed case of the disease in the city. The detection of the measles case has prompted the city's health authority to warn people to be on alert for symptoms and ensure they are up to date with their vaccinations.

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## THERAPEUTIC GOODS ADMINISTRATION

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

## OFFICE FOR DRUG CONTROL

### At last, a shot of common sense

Sunday Herald Sun, General News, 25/02/2024, Page 60

Melbourne's CBD was never an appropriate location for a second drug injecting Mfacility. As this newspaper and countless businesses and residents have repeatedly pointed out, a new venue for addicts to use illicit drugs would create a honeypot for users and dealers, tearing at the fabric of Melbourne's city centre.

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

[Back to Top](#)

## FOOD STANDARDS

### Transparency on antibiotic use required

Sun Herald, Editorials, 25/02/2024, Page 30

With the World Health Organisation identifying antimicrobial resistance as one of the globe's greatest threats, it is fair to ask why Australia is not staying in step with the international community when it comes to transparency around antibiotic use on Australian farms. Antimicrobials medications such as antibiotics and antivirals have long been used to prevent and treat infectious diseases in animals and humans.

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

### Analysis of 700 plant-based foods finds the 'healthy' alternatives are loaded with salt and fat - and lacking in bone-boosting calcium

Daily Mail Australia, Other, 24/02/2024, Emily Joshu

Researchers in Australia analyzed more than 700 plant-based foods They found high levels of salt and saturated fat and low amounts of calcium Plant-based diets are often seen as healthier alternatives to eating meat and dairy - with around one in five adopting the diet for health reasons.

[Read More](#)

[Back to Top](#)

## AICIS

No relevant coverage

[Back to Top](#)

Prepared by ISENTIA

Subject to copyright. For internal use only.

See [Copyright Terms of Use](#)

