Some people with bladder and bowel control problems find it necessary to use continence products such as pads, pants, uridomes, catheters, urine drainage bags or mattress protectors to manage condition. These continence products may be needed long-term, which can place pressure on the household budget.

There are different continence product funding schemes administered by the Australian Government and state/territory government departments. These schemes have different eligibility criteria and funding allocations. It is important to note that you could be eligible to apply for government funding through several schemes.

The National Continence Helpline (1800 33 00 66) or a continence clinic can provide you with contact details for suppliers of continence products. They can also provide you with information about your eligibility for funding schemes, which may assist with the ongoing costs of purchasing and replacing continence products.

A directory of all product suppliers is also available on continence.org.au

**Australian Government funding schemes**

Australian Government funding schemes are available to all citizens who meet the eligibility criteria, regardless of what state they live in.

**Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)**

CAPS is available to people aged five years and over, with permanent and severe incontinence due to:

- neurological conditions such as paraplegia, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, dementia or permanent and severe intellectual impairment
- other causes such as radiation therapy, certain cancers, prostate disease or prolapse, and they hold a valid Centrelink or Department of Veteran’s Affairs Pensioner Concession Card, whether as a primary cardholder or a dependent of a cardholder.

Applicants will need to complete a CAPS application form and include a health report on their condition by an appropriate health professional, such as a medical practitioner or continence nurse advisor.

The following groups of people are NOT eligible for CAPS:

- Those whose incontinence is transient (not permanent) and can be treated conservatively (e.g. through pelvic floor muscles exercises); with medication or surgery; or is confined to night time bed wetting.
- Those whose incontinence results from a condition other when an eligible neurological condition and they do not hold a Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card.
- Level 3 or 4 resident of an Australian Government-funded aged care home.
- Recipients of an Australian Government funded Level 3 or 4 care package, formerly known as Extended Aged Care at Home (EACH) package or an Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia (EACH D) package, and their care plan includes continence aids.
- Those who are eligible for assistance for continence aids under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), or under the Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP) through the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

Phone Medicare Australia on 132 011 and select Option 6 to obtain CAPS application forms. Further information on CAPS and eligibility criteria is also available from the Australian Government website, bladderbowel.gov.au/caps, or continence.org.au

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), managed by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), was launched in July 2013 and is being trialed in select areas in all states except Queensland. The full scheme will be gradually rolled out across Australia from July 2016. The NDIS supports people with a permanent disability that prevents them from taking part in everyday activities.

To check if you live in one of the trial sites and are eligible for NDIS, go to ndis.gov.au. If you are eligible and you require assistance with continence products, this will be considered in your planning discussion with the NDIA, and if approved, will replace CAPS payments. If you are not eligible for NDIS, your current level of support will continue.

For further information, phone the NDIS Helpline (1800 800 110) or go to ndis.gov.au

The NDIS trial in WA is unique because there is an additional disability service model, called *My Way*, being run in separate locations. To determine if eligible to participate in the WA NDIS *My Way* trial, go to disability.wa.gov.au
Department of Veterans’ Affairs

The Commonwealth Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) funds a range of continence products for eligible veterans and war widows or widowers through the Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP). Support can be accessed if the applicant has been assessed by a health professional as requiring products for incontinence and they hold:

- a Gold Card (eligible for treatment for all conditions regardless of whether they are related to war service); or
- a White Card and the incontinence is a result of a specific accepted disability.

Gold and White Card holders are not eligible if they are aged care residents receiving Level 3 or 4 packages.

A doctor or health professional must complete a form requesting the appropriate continence products, which is then sent to an authorised product supplier on behalf of the patient.

Enquiries regarding continence products and supply arrangements should be directed to:
National Continence Contract Team
Department of Veterans’ Affairs
GPO Box 1652
(199 Grenfell St)
Adelaide SA 5001
Phone: 133 254 or 1800 555 254 (country residents)

My Aged Care

The My Aged Care website has been established by the Australian Government to help people navigate the aged care system. In all states except Western Australia, people aged over 65 years are required to register with My Aged Care before accessing state funding.

For further information, go to myagedcare.gov.au or phone on 1800 200 422 between 8.00am and 8.00pm weekdays and 10.00am and 2.00pm on Saturday.

State or territory funding schemes

The state schemes provide a range of equipment to people living in the community who have a permanent or long-term disability. The name of the scheme differs from state to state and some state-based schemes may provide disposable products such as pads. There may also be a waiting list to access a scheme. All clients require clinical assessment by a health professional.

To find out what financial assistance is available, phone the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66, or contact the agency administering the scheme in your state or territory.

New South Wales

ENABLE is a NSW Government scheme that reduces the cost of disposable and re-usable continence aids for people who:

- have a permanent or long-term disability;
- have a Health Care Card, Health Care Interim Voucher or Pensioner Concession Card;
- are ineligible for assistance from other programs; and
- have not received compensation for their injuries or disability, including not being on a Commonwealth Rehabilitation Program, or not being supplied with aids and appliances under the Motor Accidents Act.

The applicant must be discharged from a hospital for at least one month and not be under outpatient treatment to be eligible. Subsidy is decided by product quota rather than by financial amount. Clients are required to make a co-payment each year an item is received.

Assessment is required at least annually by a medical practitioner to obtain a prescription for appropriate aids.

For more information, phone ENABLE NSW on 1800 362 253 or go to enable.health.nsw.gov.au

Victoria

Statewide Equipment Program (SWEP) funds a wide variety of continence aids (excluding disposable continence pants and pads, drip collectors and colostomy appliances) for children and adults who are:

- a permanent resident of Victoria and have a Medicare card;
- permanent or long-term disabled and/or frail aged; requiring aids and equipment from the ‘aids available’ list on a permanent or long-term basis;
- ineligible for funding due to compensation relating to their disability (such as DVA Gold Card; government-funded residential care; Level 3 or 4 aged care packages; Transport Accident Commission or Victorian Workcover Authority);
- unable to claim the aid/equipment through a private health insurance policy; and
- not a hospital inpatient or discharged within past 28 days from a public hospital.

A yearly assessment and new script by a continence nurse advisor is required for continued eligibility.

A second funding scheme, Continence Support Service (CSS), provides a flexible mix of funding for disposable continence aids, continence assessments and prescribed interventions for children aged 5–15 years who have a disability. No client co-payment is required.

Early Choices program is for children aged 0–5 years who have a severe disability requiring very high support and a range of services. A continence service will undertake an
assessment and organise appropriate interventions, including disposable nappies and/or a nappy wash service.

SWEP, CSS and Early Choices are funded by the Department of Human Services (Disability Services). Those receiving SWEP and CSS funding may also be able to access CAPS.

For more information, contact SWEP on 1300 747 937 or go to swep.bhs.org.au

For more information on either CSS or Early Choices go to dhs.vic.gov.au/disability

Queensland

The Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS), funded by the Queensland Government, provides funding for approved aids, including those for continence management, primarily for use in the home. Aids are subsidised and supplied either on a permanent-loan basis or through the purchase of disposable products. It applies to people:

- aged over 5 years who have a disability and live in Queensland;
- who hold a Pensioner Concession Card (issued either by Centrelink or DVA), Health Care Card, Health Care Interim Voucher, or Queensland Seniors Card;
- not in receipt of assistance from other government programs such as WorkCover or DVA Rehabilitation Appliances Program; and
- not in receipt of compensation or damages in respect of their disability.

Clients may receive MASS assistance in addition to CAPS or the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Scheme.

There are limits to the level of subsidy for particular categories (e.g. client’s age) and aids. No client co-payment is required.

For more information contact MASS on (07) 3136 3665 or 1300 443 570, or go to health.qld.gov.au/mass

Western Australia

The Continence Management and Support Scheme (CMASS) is administered by Independence Australia on behalf of the Disability Services Commission to assist with meeting the costs of continence products. The Silver Chain Nursing Association delivers the service at clinics throughout Western Australia, providing assessment and management advice on bladder and bowel issues. Those unable to attend a clinic can arrange a telephone consultation with a continence nurse advisor. The following eligibility criteria apply to people:

- who are a permanent resident of WA and are aged 16 years and over;
- who hold a Pensioner Concession Card or a Health Care Card;
- who have had a chronic or intractable continence condition for more than six months; and
- are not receiving a Level 3 or 4 aged care package.

To receive CMASS funding, you must contact a registered continence nurse advisor or Silver Chain (1300 787 055) to arrange an assessment by a clinician who will provide a prescription to Independence Australia.

If you are receiving products through another scheme such as CAPS, you may also be able to receive an allowance through CMASS for pads and/or products.

For more information, phone Silver Chain on 1300 787 055 or go to independenceaustralia.com

A second scheme, the Incontinence Pad Scheme (IPS), is available for those aged 3-15 years who are incontinent due to a permanent disability. IPS is funded by the Disability Services Commission and administered by Independence Australia (1300 788 855). Applicants need to be a permanent resident of WA and have a Health Care Card. For further enquiries, phone the WA Continence Advisory Service of Western Australia on (08) 9386 9777 or go to independenceaustralia.com

South Australia

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI) is able to provide some assistance for continence products to eligible clients registered with Disability SA and Disability Services. To obtain assistance the client must have spent their CAPS allowance for the year. Phone the Disability Information Service on 1300 786 117 for more information.

Tasmania

The Community Equipment Scheme (CES) is managed by the Department of Health and Human Services to reduce the cost of continence aids. Clients are required to make a co-payment for half the cost of supplies received. The scheme covers people who:

- are aged six years and over with a condition or disability resulting in incontinence;
- have a disability of long-term duration or require equipment as part of discharge planning from hospitals or residential aged care;
- hold a Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Health Benefit Card or Interim Concession Card Entitlement;
- have not received compensation or damages in respect of the disability for which the equipment is prescribed; and
- are not eligible for CAPS or DVA continence assistance.

All clients require clinical assessment by a continence nurse advisor. Phone your local continence service for more information on CES:

North West (Ulverstone): 03 6429 8438
Northern Territory
Operated by the Northern Territory Department of Health, the Disability Equipment Program (DEP) (formerly the Territory Independence and Mobility Equipment scheme) aims to provide prescribed equipment, aids and appliances to assist with safety, independence and participation in the community.

The scheme covers people of all ages who:
• have a permanent or long-term disability;
• are a resident of the Northern Territory;
• are living in or are returning to the community;
• require equipment on a permanent or long-term basis;
• receive a Centrelink Aged Pension, Centrelink Disability Support Pension, or person under 16 years for whom a family member is in receipt of a Centrelink Carer Allowance or Payment;
• are ineligible for assistance from any other government program or fund;
• are not eligible to receive compensation for the disability for which the equipment has been prescribed; and
• are not a Level 3 or 4 resident of an aged care facility.

For more information about DEP, phone your local service:
Darwin: (08) 8922 7244
Darwin Remote: (08) 8944 8641
Katherine: (08) 8973 8778
Alice Springs: (08) 8951 6747
East Arnhem: (08) 8987 0432

More information is also available at health.nt.gov.au

Australian Capital Territory
The ACT Equipment Scheme provides funding to assist with long-term disabilities to obtain and maintain a range of equipment to assist people to live at home.

To qualify for this service you must:
• have resided in the ACT for at least six months;
• have a disability that will permanently impact on quality of life;
• be ineligible to receive assistance from other government funded schemes, private health schemes, level 3 or 4 aged care packages or injury compensation; and
• hold a Centrelink Pension or Health Care Card.

For further information, phone ACT Equipment Scheme on (02) 6205 2622 or visit their website at assistance.act.gov.au

Other forms of financial assistance
There may be other forms of funding to assist with purchasing continence products. For further information, phone the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66.

The free Helpline is managed by the Continence Foundation of Australia on behalf of the Australian Government, and is staffed by continence nurse advisors who provide advice, free resources and contacts details of local services.

For more information about the Helpline and the Continence Foundation, go to continence.org.au