

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION ON CONTINENCE CARE, SUPPORT, AND PREVENTION

With more than half of all Australians living with incontinence, and 50% reporting a significant impact on their mental health, now is the time for national leadership to implement systemic change with a new **National Continence Action Plan**.

The next Federal Government can improve the lives of Australians living with incontinence, strengthen the health system, prevent, and reduce disease burden and save money long-term by improving access to specialist services and quality care and support.

**“The National Continence Action Plan has not been updated since 2014,”** says Rowan Cockerell, CEO of the Continenence Foundation of Australia. “This has resulted in significant issues with access to specialist continence services and inadequate support for continence in health and aged care policy. We can and should do so much better,” she said.

**The Foundation’s Election Platform outlines three priority areas for immediate action by the next Australian government:**

- national leadership to set the agenda for continence care and support through systemic change and evidenced based support and care
- increase the availability of specialist continence services and trained health professionals
- build the capability of the workforce across health, ageing and disability sectors to support people with incontinence

### The Impact of Incontinence

Inadequate diagnosis, treatment and support for incontinence is a significant health burden and cost to individuals and the health and social services budgets. “We know that incontinence invariably worsens over time if ignored, and can significantly impact a person’s quality of life, with both men and women, at any age, at a higher risk of depression,” says Ms Cockerell.

- By 2030, more than 6.2 million Australians will be living with incontinence.
- Productivity losses of people with incontinence are estimated to be \$34 billion per year due to lower-than- average employment rates of people experiencing incontinence.
- Without action, the number of people in residential aged care living with incontinence is expected to almost double, from 129,000 in 2010 to more than 250,000 in 2030.

“Services are stretched and there is poor use of available resources across the board. I’m particularly concerned about the lack of continence care and specialist services for regional and rural areas, especially for women and children and post-surgery. We need satellite clinics with Nurse Continence Specialists so we can better support people who are isolated and often unable to leave their homes because of their incontinence.” **Nurse Continence Specialist** with over 25 years in community nursing, specialising in aged care.

### About incontinence

Incontinence affects over 5 million Australians. It can range from a small leak to complete loss of bladder or bowel control. Help is available and, in most cases, incontinence can be better managed, treated or even cured.

**The Continenence Foundation of Australia is a not-for-profit organisation and the national peak body for incontinence prevention, management, education, awareness, information, and advocacy.**

Incontinence is common and if left untreated, becomes a chronic health condition. However, with specialist support causes can still be treatable and at the very least, better managed. Specialist services and qualified health professionals can support individuals and families to:

- improve their continence
- manage their related conditions
- improve wellbeing and participation in the community and workforce

Recognition of the value and importance of continence health diagnosis, treatment, and services, through specific and targeted investments, would contribute to better health for individuals and to better economic and social participation with the potential to reduce longer term health and social service costs.

We are calling on all Australians to pledge their support for immediate action on continence care, support, and prevention. Please pledge your support at [continence.org.au/action-on-incontinence](https://continence.org.au/action-on-incontinence)

#### Media contacts

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#### Available for interview

- Rowan Cockerell, CEO, Continence Foundation of Australia
- National Continence Helpline 1800 33 00 66 staff (Nurse Continence Specialists)
- Continence health professionals across nursing, physiotherapy, urology, gastroenterology
- People experiencing incontinence

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