

MEDIA RELEASE

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Changing lives by delivering a new model of continence care - Continenence SMART Care

The Continenence Foundation of Australia is delighted to confirm that Commonwealth Government funding has been secured under the Dementia and Aged Care Services (DACs) Fund to implement our solution for dignified continence care, **Continenence SMART Care**, the Foundation's best practice model of continence care for residential aged care which is based on research commissioned from the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI).

"With this funding we aim to deliver measurable improvement in continence care in the residential aged care sector," says Continenence Foundation of Australia CEO Rowan Cockerell.

The majority of people living in aged care experience incontinence. Whilst everyone deserves to be cared for in a way that keeps them safe, healthy, and supported with dignity, unfortunately this is often not the case. Continenence care is the subject of frequent complaints to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and '*terrible examples of substandard incontinence care*' were brought to the attention of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety in 2021 and continue to be reported today.

"The Royal Commission highlighted where the sector can do better. With Continenence SMART Care, we can help achieve that," says Ms Cockerell.

In 2019, the Foundation commissioned the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) and the lead researcher, Professor Joan Ostaszkiwicz, to develop and test a best practice model of continence care for residential aged care. This formed the solid basis of what we have now branded Continenence SMART Care.

The prevalence of incontinence in residential aged care is concerningly high and continues to rise. Failure to provide quality continence care puts consumers' health and safety at risk.

The consequences of unsafe and ineffective continence care within aged care settings include urinary tract infections, pressure injuries, falls, avoidable emergency department admissions, functional decline, reduced quality of life and death. This is all highly preventable.

Incontinence is also a major contributor to recommendations made for admission to residential aged care, and its prevalence quickly increases with time in residence. These factors drive up aged care costs significantly.

The aged care workforce is largely untrained in safe and effective continence care and incontinence management. This disparity between current clinical practice and best practice in continence care needs to be addressed. "Current education programs do not adequately provide aged care staff with the necessary knowledge and skills for good continence care, and we have a solution," says Ms Cockerell.

Continenence SMART Care has been developed to address this gap in response to the Aged Care Royal Commission recommendations. It delivers a comprehensive, targeted package to provide a substantial and measurable increase in the safety and quality of continence care in residential 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.

The Foundation welcomes the potential inclusion of continence care under the National Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicator Program and strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards. The Foundation hopes Continence SMART Care will compliment these reforms and support services to deliver best practice care and quality improvement, to achieve improved health outcomes for older Australians.

Continence SMART Care will be a co-designed best practice model of care and as such the Foundation is in the process of working with several people within the sector to make sure the model is comprehensively examined before more widespread adoption.

The Foundation is encouraging people to sign up to stay informed. To register your interest or to find out more about Continence SMART Care go to continence.org.au/Continence-SMART-Care

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Available for interview

- Rowan Cockerell, CEO, Continence Foundation of Australia
- Professor Joan Ostaszkiewicz, Director of Aged Care Research, National Ageing Research Institute (NARI)
- 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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