



Continenace
Health
Australia

2026–2027

Pre–Budget submission

Executive Summary

Incontinence affects more than 7.2 million people in Australia and costs the nation over \$2.6 billion each year in health system costs, with prevalence expected to rise sharply by 2032.¹ It is an under-recognised chronic health condition that affects people of all ages, with the majority of those affected under 65 years of age.¹ This scale and cost highlight an urgent need for targeted investment to reduce preventable health, social and economic impacts nationwide. Every dollar invested in preventative health generates approximately \$14.30 in savings across healthcare and broader social costs.² However, the lack of a coordinated national research and data agenda has limited the ability to definitively quantify avoided costs.

Without timely support, people with incontinence can face significant impacts on health and wellbeing, and profound exclusion, underscoring the need for coordinated national action to improve prevention, early intervention and access to care.

Four additional initiatives



My Continenace Care – a practical, scalable solution to uplift continence care across the aged care sector



National Public Toilet Map – modernisation to improve usability, introduce real time features and strengthen integration with accessibility partners



National continence awareness campaign – to shift low awareness, stigma and delayed help-seeking



National research, policy and data agenda – to address longstanding evidence gaps in the prevention and management of incontinence

Continenace Health Australia is strategically placed to deliver national action at the scale required through continuation of the 3-year National Continenace Program and 4 additional initiatives (\$5.91m over 3 years) that will address current gaps and limitations to improve continence health for people of all ages in Australia.

2026–2027 Pre-Budget Submission

Continenace Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
 National Continenace Program	4.43	4.56	4.70	13.69
 My Continenace Care	0.39	0.27	0.19	0.85
 National Public Toilet Map	0.25	0.26	0.26	0.77
 National continence awareness campaign	0.75	0.81	0.85	2.41
 National research, policy and data agenda	0.58	0.63	0.67	1.88
Total	6.40	6.53	6.67	19.6

¹ Deloitte Access Economics. [The economic impact of incontinence in Australia](#). Continenace Health Australia; 2024.

² [Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing](#). (2023)

2026–2027 Pre-Budget Submission

Continence Health Australia has nearly 40 years of history delivering public health initiatives, education and support for people in Australia experiencing and at risk of incontinence, while equipping the health and aged care workforce and more recently the disability workforce to provide evidence-based dignified, person-centred continence care. Continuation of the 3-year National Continence Program (2026–2029) comes at a pivotal time as major reforms across the health, disability and aged care sectors coincide with rising recognition of incontinence as a chronic health condition affecting people across the lifespan.

The additional initiatives outlined below build on the essential activities already funded through the National Continence Program. Investing in these 4 additional initiatives will accelerate national awareness of incontinence as a chronic health condition; ensure people experiencing or at risk of incontinence can access timely and appropriate prevention, treatment and management support; uplift workforce capability; and strengthen Australia's research and data landscape. This investment aligns with the Australian Government's policy aims to reduce preventable chronic disease and embed prevention throughout health policy and services, as well as build the capability of the health, disability and aged care workforce.



My Continence Care Transforming continence care through a skilled, confident aged care workforce

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety emphasised the lack of access to essential health care for older people and the importance of training, workforce development and adherence to standards of care within aged care. My Continence Care™ strengthens workforce capability through Residential Aged Care and Support at Home programs delivering proactive, person-centred continence support across the care continuum.

My Continence Care – Residential is a non-clinical, standards-aligned program that builds best practice continence care in aged care through an eLearning module using real-life scenarios to strengthen team-based, dignified care. The pilot delivered strong results across 11 residential aged care sites with 936 enrolments, 525 completions, 98% of staff reporting improved understanding and 99% applying learnings. National implementation will enhance staff confidence and deliver consistent, person-centred continence care that increases independence for a modest funding increase of \$0.34 million over 3 years.

Development of My Continence Care – Home aims to equip home care workers with skills to support older people to maintain independence and prevent functional decline. With 2 in 10 home care recipients experiencing incontinence, a major driver of avoidable residential aged care admissions, national rollout of My Continence Care – Home will prevent and reduce the unintended consequences of inadequate continence care for older people. Scaling the program with an additional \$0.51 million over 3 years will strengthen proactive continence support and help older Australians remain safe, well and independent at home.



Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
My Continence Care – Residential	0.17	0.08	0.09	0.34
My Continence Care – Home	0.22	0.19	0.10	0.51
Total	0.39	0.27	0.19	0.85



National Public Toilet Map

Supporting independence by helping people find toilets when they need them



The National Public Toilet Map is an essential resource supporting independence, dignity and mobility across Australia, particularly for people managing incontinence, disability, chronic conditions or age-related limitations. This free website and app lists nearly 25,000 public toilets, with annual initiatives like the Great Dunny Hunt keeping publicly sourced information current and increasing public awareness.

The National Public Toilet Map requires revitalisation to improve accessibility, accuracy and reliability, supported by targeted marketing and partnerships such as integrating Changing Places toilet facilities and Share the Dignity vending machines. Planned upgrades include intuitive navigation, a real-time 'near me' locator and onboarding tools to support first-time users.

With additional funding, the National Public Toilet Map can evolve into a world-class public infrastructure tool that reflects Australia's commitment to inclusion, health equity and smart technology. Additional funding of \$0.77 million over 3 years will revitalise the National Public Toilet Map.

BINS4Blokes complements this initiative by installing continence product disposal bins in male public toilets, delivering dignity and hygiene for men. Linking these sites to the National Public Toilet Map improves access and awareness. Additional funding would expand coverage and increase the number of disposal bins available.



I love that this app is community sourced and updated ... I'm loving the additions folks have added for BINS4Blokes and accessible options. I'd love to see more 24-hour accessible options, particularly for the MLAK [Master Locksmiths Master Key] holders across all Council areas.

NPTM user, October 2025

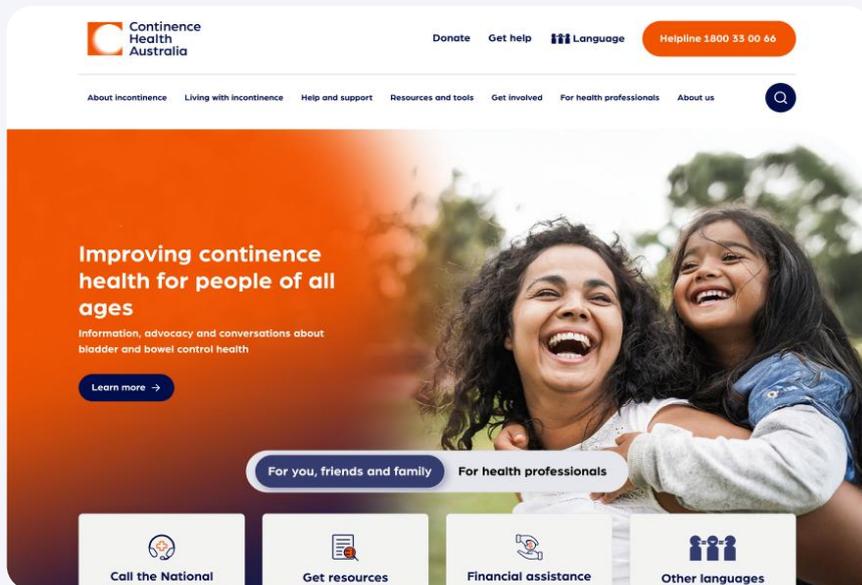
Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
National Public Toilet Map	0.25	0.26	0.26	0.77



National continence awareness campaign

Elevating continence awareness to boost health literacy and connect people to care

Low awareness of incontinence remains a major barrier to people accessing Continenace Health Australia’s expertise, resources and evidence-based programs. Increasing national awareness improves preventative action and empowers people to seek help earlier, improving bladder and bowel control health and delivering system-wide benefits including fewer emergency department presentations, reduced hospitalisations and delayed entry into residential aged care.



The redeveloped user-friendly Continenace Health Australia website



Janine, National Continence Helpline Manager, 2026

A coordinated national campaign will highlight incontinence as a significant health issue and promote Continenace Health Australia as the trusted peak body. Through targeted, year-round awareness activities aligned with priority populations and key initiatives, the campaign will normalise continence health conversations and improve continence health literacy, increasing utilisation of the redeveloped user-friendly website, increasing calls to the National Continence Helpline and enabling consumers and health professionals to access high quality, reliable information, education and support.

With Continenace Health Australia’s communications delivering a social return of \$16.37 for every dollar invested, an additional \$2.41 million over 3 years will support a coordinated national awareness campaign that strengthens awareness, help-seeking and early intervention in continence health.



I want to express my deep gratitude for the advice received from the nurse continence specialist during a call I made in February 2025. I had experienced recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs) with self-catheterisation. I want to let the nurse know that she saved my life as her advice changed the way I self-catheterised, which resolved my UTIs.

National Continence Helpline caller, January 2026

Continenace Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
National continence awareness campaign	0.75	0.81	0.85	2.41



National research, policy and data agenda

Driving innovation and impact through collaboration and consumer-centred research

A targeted national continence research program is urgently needed to fill major data gaps and strengthen translation into practice. Continence Health Australia will lead a coordinated, consumer-informed program delivering clear health and economic benefits through:

- establishing a National Continence Research Consortium to partner with scientists and clinicians nationwide
- embedding lived experience and needs within research priorities and initiatives
- positioning Continence Health Australia as a national research collaboration platform and portal
- driving a research agenda aligned to consumer, provider and policymaker needs.

This work will improve continence care, reduce hospitalisations, delay aged care entry and guide cost-effective policy decisions.

National continence health data strategy

Large data gaps limit effective clinical care and policy. Missing information includes prevalence, service utilisation and outcomes data and workforce trends. Continence Health Australia proposes a national continence data strategy focused on:

- adding continence questions to national surveys
- improving data collection across aged care, the NDIS and Medicare
- linking industry research with policymakers and practitioners to drive uptake of technological advancements

This strategy will enable national coordination and stronger evidence and contribute to reduced long-term health system costs through targeted policy initiatives.

Best practice guidelines for continence care

Continence Health Australia will lead the development of culturally relevant best practice continence guidelines for priority populations, engaging professional bodies to ensure consistent, high-quality, person-centred care nationwide. We will identify components in international continence guidelines that can be translated into the Australian context.



Investing \$1.87 million over 3 years will enhance and strengthen a national research, policy and data agenda to inform robust policy and embed evidence-based treatment and management options for people experiencing incontinence.

Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
Continence research program	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.60
Continence health data strategy	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.63
Best practice guidelines for continence care	0.20	0.21	0.23	0.64
Total	0.59	0.62	0.66	1.87



National Continence Program funding continuation

Continued investment in the National Continence Program (NCP) represents exceptional value for money, delivering strong social and economic returns for government and the community. For 16 years, the NCP has been a cornerstone of national health promotion and early intervention, providing trusted, evidence-based services to people across the lifespan.

Continuation of the NCP through 2026–2029 at \$4.4 million per year, with indexation, will sustain and extend current services and support a

proactive approach that recognises incontinence as a chronic health condition that occurs at any life stage from early childhood through adolescence, adulthood and into older age.

A renewed 3-year agreement will allow the program to expand its reach and impact through enhanced National Continence Helpline services, refreshed national directories, targeted public health activities across 6 priority population groups, and a strengthened program to build a skilled health workforce. The program continues to demonstrate high social return on investment, calculated at \$10 for every \$1 spent, reducing hospitalisations, delaying residential aged care entry, improving productivity, strengthening independence and aligning strongly with Australian Government priorities in prevention, primary care and chronic disease management.

Additional 3-year funding of the NCP will ensure the continuation of vital continence health activities and supports accessed by people across Australia every day, while enabling longer-term planning, national coordination and growth in reach and capacity that short-term contracts cannot deliver. Over the next 3 years, Continenence Health Australia will deepen evaluation capability, enhance data quality, refine models of care and scale initiatives that have already shown clear health, social and economic benefit. Sustained investment will also increase public awareness, reduce stigma and strengthen collaboration across the health, disability and aged care sectors.

With continued funding, Continenence Health Australia can embed health system-wide improvements that enhance workforce capability, promote early help-seeking and maximise the program's impact. By securing the 2026–2029 NCP with \$13.69 million over 3 years, the Australian Government can confidently invest in a low-cost, high-impact program that delivers measurable value, reduces inequities and supports a sustainable, person-centred continence health system for the future.



Continenence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
National Continence Program	4.43	4.56	4.70	13.69

Appendices

Continence Health Australia

Incontinence is a crosscutting public health issue affecting over 7.2 million people in Australia – that's 1 in 3 people aged 15 and over. The total annual costs are estimated at \$100.4 billion, including \$66.6 billion in direct financial costs and \$33.8 billion in lost wellbeing. Continence health issues impact people of all backgrounds, genders and ages with over 70% of people affected being under 65 years. With up to 8.6 million people in Australia aged 15 and older projected to be living with incontinence by 2032, targeted investment is urgently needed.³



Incontinence is a common and often chronic condition with complex causes. It may be a symptom of an underlying mental or physical health condition or illness, a consequence of life transitions such as pregnancy and childbirth or a side effect of treatment. People of all ages and in all communities are affected by it. It is not, as commonly thought, an inevitable consequence of ageing.

As the peak body for bladder and bowel control health, Continence Health Australia empowers individuals with trustworthy information, strengthens health and ageing workforce capability and advocates for inclusive health policy reform. We work to destigmatise incontinence while driving systemic improvements in service delivery, funding and clinical practice. Through strategic partnerships across the health, ageing, disability and community sectors, we strengthen best-practice care for people experiencing and at risk of incontinence.

Our membership encompasses clinicians, researchers, consumers and carers across all states and territories ensuring initiatives are informed by both clinical knowledge and lived experience. Supported by robust infrastructure and proven operational capacity, we deliver impartial policy advice to government while implementing nationally recognised programs such as the National Continence Helpline, professional workforce development and public awareness campaigns. This unique position enables us to lead national reform and deliver evidence-based solutions that advance continence health for people of all ages in Australia.

Key activities proposed for the 2026–2029 National Continence Program include:

- enhancing the National Continence Helpline staffed by nurse continence specialists. In 2025, we responded to 14,541 calls, providing free, confidential information, advice and support
- strengthening an online service directory of more than 1,092 continence services across Australia, which can be searched by postcode to locate the nearest service, supported by a comprehensive online product directory to assist in accessing continence products and aids
- leading public health initiatives prioritising 6 key population groups – women, older people, First Nations peoples, multicultural communities, people with disability, children and young people – all who face significant barriers to accessing continence health information and support
- building a skilled workforce through education events such as the National Continence Health Conference, state-based professional development days, special interest group webinars, the Australian and New Zealand Continence Journal (ANZCJ) and 30 continence learning modules accessed by over 4,000 health workers in 2025, providing accessible, evidence-based learning for all workforce levels from personal care workers to medical specialists.

³ Deloitte Access Economics. [The economic impact of incontinence in Australia](#). Continence Health Australia; 2024.

The additional 4 initiatives outlined below are designed to extend and amplify the foundational work already supported through the National Continence Program. Together, they will advance how incontinence is understood and addressed nationally, embedding recognition of incontinence as a chronic health condition; improving early access to prevention, evidence-based treatment and ongoing management support; strengthening the capability and confidence of the health, disability and aged care workforce; and advancing Australia's research, data and evidence base. Through these coordinated investments, Australia will be well positioned as an international leader in continence health and informed consumer care:

- implementing **My Continence Care – Residential**, an innovative training program that empowers residential aged care staff with the knowledge and confidence to deliver holistic continence care, and adapting and testing this program for in-home aged care settings
- modernising the **National Public Toilet Map** toiletmap.gov.au to improve usability, add real-time features and strengthen integration with accessibility partners. In 2025, the website received 644,215 visits, a 27% increase on the previous year, and now includes almost 25,000 toilets across Australia to support dignity and independence
- launching a **national continence awareness campaign** to shift low awareness, stigma and delayed help-seeking behaviour
- developing a **priority-driven national research and policy agenda** underpinned by consumer preferences and academic partnerships, to support delivery of high-quality evidence-based equitable continence care for every person living in Australia; and developing a national **continence data strategy** to facilitate a targeted response to the needs of under-served geographic and demographic community groups.



My Contenance Care™

Two programs, one vision: Transforming continence care through a skilled, confident aged care workforce

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety set a clear mandate for transformative reform across the aged care sector. With a new Aged Care Act, strengthened Quality Standards, and the Support at Home program, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver care that truly reflects dignity, respect and quality of life for older people in Australia. To achieve this, action is needed across the aged care continuum:

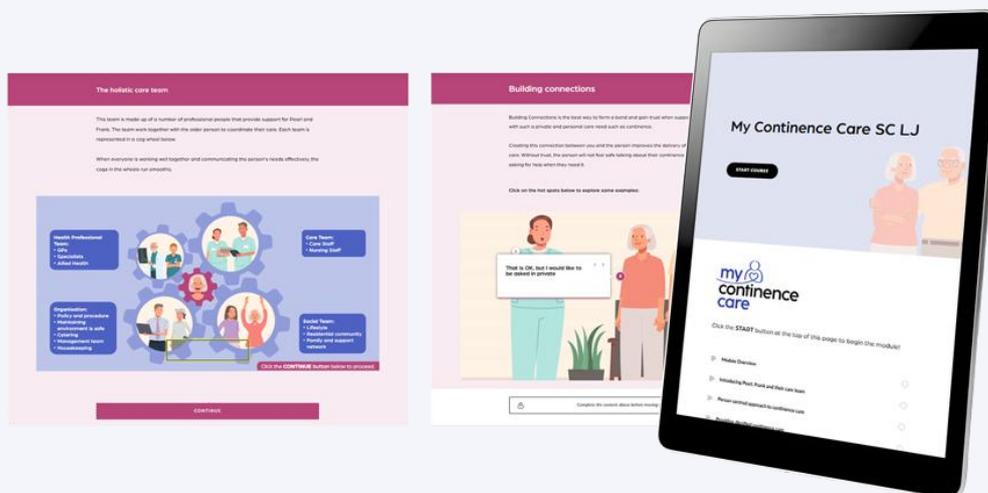
My Contenance Care – Residential is a unique program that embeds best practice continence care in residential aged care facilities. It is a non-clinical program aligned with quality standards, featuring an eLearning module, Contenance Conversations (toolbox talks) and practical resources. Significantly, the program embeds the why, what and how to upskill knowledge and boost confidence in delivering quality continence care.

- The eLearning module follows married couple Pearl and Frank’s journey into residential aged care, exploring their continence care pathways
- Contenance Conversations (toolbox talks) use real life scenarios to inspire peer-to-peer learning and team strategies for dignified care.

The pilot was deemed an outstanding success: 936 enrolments; 525 completions; 816 toolbox talks across 11 sites

- 98% of staff gained a better understanding of best practice continence care
- 99% applied learnings in their practice
- participants reported that the program was incredibly engaging, relatable and easy to navigate
- staff reported improved confidence and capability especially for personal care attendants, increased resident and family involvement in continence care decisions, and stronger team collaboration.

National implementation of My Contenance Care – Residential supports the aged care workforce in embedding dignified, person-centred continence care to optimise individual comfort, function and independence.



My Contenance Care eLearning module

My Continence Care – Home aims to equip home care workers with skills that support older people with their independence and prevent decline.

With 456,000 professionals and 275,000 older people accessing home care, translation of the My Continence Care program for in-home care is critical to prevent early admission to residential aged care, particularly given incontinence is a major contributor to increased admissions. Incontinence prevalence quickly increases once people move to a residential aged care facility.⁴

- incontinence prevalence: 65% in residential aged care; 15–20% in the community, with incidence rising sharply with frailty and chronic illness⁵
- 2 in 10 home care recipients experience incontinence⁶
- 72,900 primary carers provide extensive continence support; 3 in 4 spend 40 hours or more per week caring⁷
- hospital costs for incontinence as the principal diagnosis is around \$59.6 million.⁸

The Support at Home program is designed to keep people living in their own home. National implementation of My Continence Care – Home will support the direct care workforce to ensure quality proactive continence care is provided so that older people can remain in their home.

Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
My Continence Care – Residential	0.17	0.08	0.09	0.34
My Continence Care – Home	0.22	0.19	0.10	0.51
Total	0.39	0.27	0.19	0.85

⁴ *Incontinence in Australia: Understanding the challenge and opportunities for care.* [Incontinence in Australia: Understanding the challenge and opportunities for care – Australian College of Nursing](#)

⁵ *Incontinence in Australia: Understanding the challenge and opportunities for care.* [Incontinence in Australia: Understanding the challenge and opportunities for care – Australian College of Nursing](#)

⁶ Deloitte Access Economics. [The economic impact of incontinence in Australia](#). Continence Health Australia; 2024.

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2013. *Incontinence in Australia*. Cat. No. DIS 61. Canberra: AIHW [Incontinence in Australia \(full publication; 7 June 2013 edition\) \(AIHW\)](#)

⁸ Deloitte Access Economics. [The economic impact of incontinence in Australia](#). Continence Health Australia; 2024.



National Public Toilet Map

Supporting independence by helping people find toilets when they need them

The National Public Toilet Map (NPTM) is a critical resource supporting the independence, dignity and mobility of people living in Australia, especially those managing incontinence, disabilities, chronic health conditions and age-related limitations. The NPTM is a free website and app that includes nearly 25,000 public toilet listings. Its



data is crowdsourced from across Australia and has seen steady growth in usage, particularly on mobile devices, reflecting its importance for people on the move. Annual campaigns like the Great Dunny Hunt help keep the map current and raise public awareness.

A comprehensive review of the NPTM found that while the map is a vital tool, its interface is confusing, its branding inconsistent and its search functions counterintuitive. The NPTM requires revitalisation to improve user experience and accessibility across all platforms, ensure data accuracy and reliability, and increase awareness and usage through targeted marketing and partnerships (eg inclusion of Accessible Australia Changing Places toilet facilities and Share the Dignity vending machines). Key improvements will include more intuitive navigation, a real-time ‘near me’ locator and onboarding features such as FAQs and guidance screens to support first-time and less tech-savvy users.

Improving the NPTM goes beyond a digital upgrade – it’s an investment in public health, accessibility and community wellbeing. With targeted funding, the NPTM can evolve into a world-class public infrastructure tool that reflects Australia’s commitment to inclusion, health equity and smart technology.

Complementing these improvements, the BINS4Blokes initiative plays a vital role in supporting men living with incontinence by promoting the installation of dedicated continence product disposal bins in male public toilets. Linked to the NPTM, these facilities become easier to locate, helping men quickly find dignified, hygienic disposal options when they are out in the community. With more than 80 bins already installed nationwide and strong community advocacy, additional funding will not only expand the program’s reach but also increase the number of disposal bins available, ensuring more men can participate confidently in everyday life.

Continenence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
National Public Toilet Map	0.25	0.26	0.26	0.77



National continence awareness campaign

Elevating continence awareness to boost health literacy and connect people to care

Limited public awareness continues to be a major constraint on the reach and effectiveness of Continence Health Australia’s programs and initiatives. Strengthening awareness of, and engagement with, Continence Health Australia is fundamental to ensuring people can readily access trusted information, resources and evidence-based programs. Earlier engagement supports timely prevention and management of bladder and bowel control conditions, delivering measurable system-wide benefits including reduced emergency department presentations, fewer hospitalisations, delayed entry into residential aged care and lower demand on health services. Continence Health Australia generates \$16.37 for every dollar spent on its communications.

A nationally coordinated awareness campaign is critical to establishing continence health as a priority health issue by improving continence health literacy, reducing stigma, normalising help-seeking behaviours, and ensuring individuals and health professionals know where to access credible information, services and support.

Across the year, we will deliver frequent, targeted and innovative promotional campaigns aligned with priority populations and key initiatives such as the Great Dunny Hunt, Women’s Health Week, Men’s Health Week, International Day of People with Disability and World Continence Week. The national continence awareness campaign will underpin and amplify all other campaigns, driving a unified call to action to contact the National Continence Helpline, visit our redeveloped user-friendly website and access our suite of updated evidence-based resources. Partnering with experts in values-based messaging and design will ensure our communications resonate deeply, reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviour nationwide.



Poster promoting 2025 World Continence Week

Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
National continence awareness campaign	0.75	0.81	0.85	2.41



National research, policy and data agenda

Driving innovation and impact through collaboration and consumer-centred research

National continence research program

Prioritisation of a targeted national continence research program is urgently needed to address critical gaps in evidence and accelerate translation into practice. Continence research in Australia is currently fragmented and underfunded. Continence Health Australia will lead a coordinated, consumer-informed program that delivers measurable health and economic benefits.

Key actions include:

- establishing a National Continence Research Consortium to partner with scientists and clinicians nationwide
- defining consumer-reported research priorities
- positioning Continence Health Australia as the portal for researchers to collaborate with consumers
- driving a national research agenda that addresses unmet needs of consumers, service providers and policy makers.

This program will generate evidence to improve continence care, potentially reducing hospital admissions and delaying aged care transitions. Findings will inform cost-effective policy decisions. Linking research with consumer priorities ensures research generates real-world improvements in continence care and preserves dignity, independence and quality of life.

National continence health data strategy

Significant data gaps across continence health impede clinical care, policy and societal responses to this cross-cutting issue. Missing information includes:

- prevalence and cost of incontinence
- service scope, location and utilisation of current continence services
- outcomes data, including return on investment in continence services
- specialist continence workforce trends.

Improved data collection is critical to strengthen continence care for people of all ages in Australia. Continence Health Australia proposes developing a comprehensive National Continence Data Strategy to address these gaps through:

- adding continence questions to official surveys such as Census Health Conditions and National Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
- collecting and reporting continence service data through aged care, the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Medicare
- closing research gaps and creating dedicated continence health funding streams
- connecting industry research with policymakers and practitioners to promote uptake of technological advancements.

This strategy would involve collaboration with government, service providers and researchers across the disability, aged care, health and social services sectors. Continence Health Australia already invests significant resources to compensate for the lack of national data and is well positioned to lead this work. Funding will enable a coordinated, evidence-based approach to improve continence care outcomes and reduce long-term costs.

Best practice guidelines for continence care

Continence Health Australia is committed to ensuring highly quality evidence-based care is accessible across all settings. While international guidelines exist, there is an urgent need to translate these into practical, culturally relevant models for Australia, particularly for vulnerable populations such as First Nations communities, people with disability and those living in rural and remote areas.

To address this, we will develop best practice guidelines – strategic packages of therapeutic components derived from global best practice – alongside workflows tailored for diverse contexts. We will engage with peak professional bodies to promote these vital resources. Continence guidelines will provide clear, actionable guidance for health professionals including General Practitioners, ensuring consistency and quality in care delivery.

Initial priorities include working with representative organisations to create guidelines for First Nations women and children, people with disability and people living in under-serviced regions of Australia. Each guideline will be trialled, evaluated and refined to ensure effectiveness and cultural safety. This translational work bridges the gap between evidence and practice, empowering clinicians to deliver person-centred care that upholds dignity and improves outcomes.

By investing in best practice guideline development, Continence Health Australia can standardise evidence-based practice nationwide, reduce disparities for priority population groups and enhance continence care for all people in Australia.

Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
Continence research program	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.60
Continence health data strategy	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.63
Best practice guidelines for continence care	0.20	0.21	0.23	0.64
Total	0.59	0.62	0.66	1.87



National Continence Program (NCP)

The renewal of the 3 year National Continence Program (2026–2029) comes at a pivotal time, as major reforms across the health, disability and aged care sectors coincide with rising recognition of incontinence as a chronic health condition experienced across the lifespan. With every dollar spent on the National Continence Program resulting in a \$10.07 return in social value, continued investment provides a significant opportunity to modernise and expand the program’s reach, strengthening national services and targeting initiatives to deliver greater impact for the community including:

- enhancing the **National Continence Helpline** and refreshing the national directories to provide accessible, evidence-based information and support for people of all ages located across Australia
- targeting **public health initiatives across 6 priority population groups** – women, older people, First Nations peoples, multicultural communities, people with disability, children and young people – ensuring equitable access and tailored approaches
- building a **skilled health workforce** by providing evidence-based learning and development opportunities for all workforce levels from personal care workers to medical specialists.

National Continence Helpline

Driving equity in continence care

The National Continence Helpline (NCHL) (1800 33 00 66), staffed by nurse continence specialists, is a national gateway to continence care, connecting callers to free, confidential support, evidence-based resources, product advice, government funding schemes such as the Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS), National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and My Aged Care, and providing referrals to local services. For people living in rural and remote areas of Australia where continence clinics are scarce, the NCHL is a vital access point for expert advice, advancing equity in healthcare.



Last year, the NCHL handled 14,541 enquiries, supporting 11,357 people. Most callers were women (73%), with an average age of 68 years. The helpline also plays a vital role for carers (33% of calls) and health professionals (19%), reinforcing its importance across the care ecosystem. Despite this volume, the service remains highly responsive: average wait time is just 66 seconds, with 80% of calls answered in under a minute, and callers can book a time that suits them if needed.

Through our partnership with BrightSky Australia, the NCHL also provides emergency continence products to callers experiencing financial hardship. In 2025, 127 people received a free 2-week emergency supply of products, preventing avoidable health complications that lead to emergency hospital admissions, and improving quality of life.

Free access to two comprehensive online directories – our continence service directory and continence product directory – is available via the Continence Health Australia website. These easy-to-navigate resources help individuals and carers connect with trusted suppliers, manufacturers, health professionals and health services across Australia. The directories ensure coverage of priority groups and funding options, making it simple to find relevant products and services locally. For personalised support, NCHL staff can guide callers through the directories to ensure they access the help they need.

While the NCHL is delivering exceptional value, callers' needs are becoming more complex and demand is expected to rise significantly as community awareness of continence health grows. To meet these evolving needs, key enhancements are required including:

- enhancing caller experience and continuity by linking related calls for seamless care, introducing follow-up calls and enabling video consultations with health professionals in rural and remote regions
- strengthening data and evaluation of the NCHL service by improving data collection and post-call surveys to measure outcomes, as well as developing call templates and automating resource ordering for efficiency
- expanding reach and awareness by promoting the NCHL through conferences, media campaigns and industry partnerships, and by targeting rural, remote, low socioeconomic status, multicultural and First Nations communities to improve equity.
- improving our online service and product directories to deliver comprehensive, easy-to-navigate tools to locate continence suppliers, services and health professionals.

By funding these improvements, we can ensure the National Continence Helpline continues to deliver timely, equitable and expert continence support for the millions of people in Australia who need it, reducing pressure on the primary and tertiary public health systems.

Case study



A mother's thank you!

How the right advice changed her son's life (November 2025)

A caller phoned the National Continence Helpline to express her appreciation for the support and direction provided to her a few years ago to manage bedwetting for her teenage son who has a neurodiverse condition. He had a suicide attempt as a result of not coping with the ongoing bedwetting issue. He was seeing a psychologist to assist with this at the time, but with limited success in improving his mental health. Furthermore, he had several visits to his GP but no useful information or strategies were provided to the mother.

When she phoned the helpline years ago, it was recommended to see a nurse continence specialist to further assess her son and investigate any contributing issues that may have been contributing to the nighttime wetting.

A continence assessment recommended that he would benefit from completing a sleep study. This proved to be the missing piece in the jigsaw, revealing that he had sleep apnoea. When this was addressed, his bedwetting completely ceased and he is now able to live a 'normal life'. He has found employment, his mental health has improved significantly, and he is more self-confident and outgoing.

Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total
National Continence Helpline	1.46	1.60	1.72	4.78

Public health in action

Advancing health equity for priority communities

By embedding continence health literacy, prevention and equitable access to continence care at the heart of our program, we can alleviate avoidable impacts on health and wellbeing for millions of Australians. By prioritising early action and preventive approaches, we can safeguard the wellbeing of future generations and support a more resilient, sustainable care system, knowing that every dollar Continence Health Australia spends on health promotion represents \$16.37 in social value. These efforts will reduce pressure on the health system and drive lasting generational change to ensure continence health is understood, normalised and prioritised, and directly aligns with the national Measuring What Matters framework and its commitment to equitable access and better outcomes for all.



To achieve this, we will establish a continence health alliance that brings together key stakeholders to improve awareness, expand access to services and lead collaborative action on continence health. The outcome will be a sustainable multi-sector partnership that drives education, advocacy and innovation to reduce the impact of incontinence on key priority groups.

We are focussed on 6 priority groups – women, older people, First Nations peoples, multicultural communities, people with disability, children and young people – all of whom are disproportionately impacted by incontinence and face systemic barriers that limit timely access to information, resources and services, resulting in worse health outcomes.

By centring these priority groups in our approach, we aim to deliver measurable improvements in health equity, empower individuals with knowledge and support, and create systemic change that ensures continence care is accessible, inclusive and transformative for future generations.

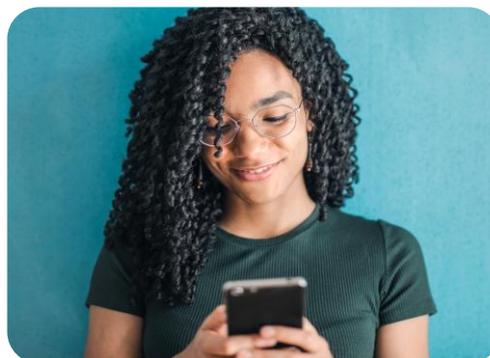


‘The information [I received] has been wonderful and gives me knowledge and confidence to get appropriate management for my husband with dementia.’

– National Continence Helpline caller, February 2025.

Women

Continence health is a critical issue for women, who are twice as likely to experience incontinence than men and who often – mistakenly – assume it is a normal consequence of childbirth or ageing. Incontinence is a crosscutting public health issue affecting over 4.8 million women and girls in Australia – that’s 1 in 3!⁹ Despite its prevalence, continence health remains under-discussed and under-prioritised, leaving many women without the interventions they need,



⁹ Deloitte Access Economics. [The economic impact of incontinence in Australia](#). Continence Health Australia; 2024.

particularly those living in rural or remote areas of Australia.

Priority actions include:

- raising awareness about continence and pelvic health, and available support
- integrating screening tools into maternity, fitness and primary care settings for timely intervention
- collaborating with health, fitness and women's organisations (eg Jean Hailes Women's Health, AusActive and The Australian Women's Health Alliance) to embed continence and pelvic health in education and care pathways
- providing mobile-first platforms and interactive tools to empower women to manage pelvic health confidently.



By raising awareness and promoting early detection and screening at key life stages including perinatal and postpartum, perimenopause and menopause and during high-impact activity, we aim to promote timely support and help-seeking behaviours to improve quality of life for women. We will also actively promote pelvic floor muscle training as a proven preventative measure, leveraging our dedicated, refreshed Pelvic Floor First website to increase access for all women, particularly those in rural and remote areas. These actions will directly support the goals of the National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030 by fostering early help-seeking, improving access to trusted health information and strengthening preventative health measures across the life course.



'I found the video on how to contract [my pelvic floor muscles] correctly really helpful...
Thank you.'

– Webinar participant, September 2025

Older people

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety set a clear mandate for reform with 148 recommendations emphasising dignity, respect and quality of life for older people in Australia.¹⁰ In June 2024, 275,000 people accessed home care and nearly 190,000 lived in residential facilities,¹¹ supported by a diverse workforce of 456,000.¹² In addition, many of the 3 million informal carers in Australia provide care for older loved ones.¹³

Key engagement priorities include:

- creating and advocating for resources that empower older adults and carers in continence care, including a self-assessment tool for shared decision making, awareness initiatives and improved home support
- enhancing the Continence Support Now website, ensuring free, plain-language, accessible content for older people and carers, including those in rural and remote communities and people with low socioeconomic status

¹⁰ Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. [Care, dignity and respect](#); 2021.

¹¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. [People using aged care](#); 2025.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics. [Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: Summary of findings](#); 2024

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics. [Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: Summary of findings](#); 2024.

- implementing strategic marketing to increase use of the National Public Toilet Map and National Continence Helpline
- building partnerships with key organisations such as the Returned and Services League (RSL), Grey Nomads and The Council on the Ageing (COTA) to strengthen outreach and engagement.

We are committed to amplifying older people's voices, providing transparent policy advice and partnering with advocacy groups such as Dementia Support Australia and Parkinson's Australia, and the workforce to strengthen sector capacity. These actions will drive awareness campaigns, educational initiatives and evidence-based policy, ensuring person-centred, equitable and sustainable continence care for older people in Australia.



'My partner has been incontinent for years [after prostate cancer] and we were never told that he can have financial assistance. That's great news! Thank you for your advice today.'

- National Continence Helpline caller, March 2025.

First Nations peoples

Incontinence impacts First Nations peoples at higher rates than the rest of the population.¹⁴ Intersecting barriers such as geographic isolation, cost and limited availability of culturally responsive services continue to restrict access to quality health information and support. These challenges are even more acute for First Nations peoples living in rural and remote areas.

Through strategic partnerships with First Nations leaders, organisations that elevate First Nations voices such as the National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) and Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, and First Nations communities, we will:

- strengthen continence health literacy for First Nations communities
- expand access to culturally safe, codesigned continence resources and support
- actively promote the National Continence Helpline as a free service that is accessible to all First Nations communities including those in rural and remote areas
- work alongside First Nations health organisations and health professionals to embed continence health in existing First Nations health programs.

Our focus on early detection, pelvic floor training, improved health literacy and encouraging early help-seeking directly supports the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031, while advancing equity through improved access and health literacy is central to the plan's equity goals.

These initiatives will generate meaningful change, delivering better continence health outcomes, driving stronger community engagement and embedding an inclusive, person-centred approach to continence care across First Nations peoples in Australia.

¹⁴ Smith K, Sutherland A, Hyde Z, Crawford R, Dwyer A, Malay R, Skeaf L, Flicker L, Atkinson D, LoGiudice D. Assessment, incidence and factors associated with urinary incontinence in older Aboriginal Australians. *Intern Med J.* 2019 Sep;49(9):1111–1118. [https://doi: 10.1111/imj.14192](https://doi.org/10.1111/imj.14192) PMID: 30548387

Multicultural communities

Recognised as a priority population in the National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030, multicultural communities face unique language, cultural, literacy and systemic barriers that limit timely access to health information and services. These result in higher rates of chronic health conditions, suboptimal healthcare provision and poorer health outcomes.¹⁵

In collaboration with organisations such as the Ethnic Communities Councils and The Water Well Project, as well as multicultural community leaders and communities across Australia, we will:

- target outreach activities and campaigns with nuanced messaging to amplify awareness and promote help-seeking behaviours in diverse multicultural communities including smaller and harder-to-reach communities
- increase access to codesigned translated continence health resources to improve understanding and reduce barriers to care
- promote the National Continence Helpline for culturally responsive continence advice and support, with interpreting support through Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS)
- build sustainable partnerships with multicultural and health organisations to embed continence health in community programs.

These efforts will strengthen health literacy and help-seeking behaviours, fostering healthier, more inclusive communities.

People with disability

In 2022, 5.5 million people in Australia (21.4%) had a disability¹⁶ and those with incontinence often experience more severe disability and health problems.^{17 18} The 2024 Continence Health Australia National Consumer Survey found higher rates of incontinence among people with disability compared to the general population.¹⁹ Barriers such as lower socioeconomic status, limited literacy and discrimination further restrict access to affordable, equitable continence care. In addition, continence assessment, care, therapy, treatment and equipment are provided by the health system and the NDIS depending on individual circumstances. Continence Health Australia is uniquely positioned to assist people with disability and their carers to navigate these systems to meet their continence needs.

To address these challenges, we will work alongside disability-focused organisations such as Inclusion Australia and Amaze, and the disability community to:

- scope, plan and deliver tailored programs for people with disability and their informal carers to improve awareness and access to inclusive continence health information and services
- build sustainable partnerships with disability organisations and the disability support workforce to enhance capability and strengthen sector knowledge for long-term impact
- gather data and lived experience insights to influence policy, develop integrated guidelines and advocate for reforms that improve health outcomes nationally
- increase health worker awareness of inclusive continence care for people with disability.

¹⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *Culturally and linguistically diverse Australians*; 2025.

¹⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. *ABS survey of disability, ageing and carers 2022*; 2024

¹⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013). Incontinence in Australia. Cat. no. DIS 61. Canberra: AIHW Incontinence in Australia (full publication; 7 June 2013 edition) (AIHW)

¹⁸ Avery, J. C., Gill, T. K., Taylor, A. W., & Stocks, N. P. (2014). Urinary incontinence: severity, perceptions and population prevalence in Australian women. *The Australian and New Zealand Continence Journal*, 20(1), 7–13.

¹⁹ Continence Health Australia (2024). National consumer survey

Importantly, these initiatives will support Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031 by creating a more inclusive health system while driving systemic change to improve continence health outcomes nationwide.



'Your company is amazing and call backs have been terrific as I have been caught on a journey and you were able to help me and keep me moving forward.'

– National Continence Helpline caller, May 2025

Children and young people

An estimated 3–12% of children experience daytime wetting, 1–3% soiling and up to 20% bedwetting.^{20 21} Our work with children and young people is critical because early intervention can shape lifelong health outcomes. Continence issues in childhood and adolescence often go unspoken, impacting development, schooling and mental health, resulting in delayed care and adverse health outcomes that can persist into adulthood.²² Addressing these issues by improving health equity and empowering parents and caregivers to optimise children’s health outcomes aligns with the goals of the National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020–2030.

Our focus will be on:

- equipping families and professionals, including GPs, with knowledge and practical tools to identify and address common bladder and bowel symptoms including daytime wetting and bedwetting in children and young people
- preventing lifelong continence problems through primary prevention, early intervention and treatment strategies
- providing evidence-based age-appropriate toilet development resources for parents, carers, educators and maternal and child health nurses
- ensuring equity by targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged communities with tailored support.

Partnerships with organisations such as Raising Kids Network and Maternal, Child and Family Health Nurses Australia will support our work to create a generation that is informed, confident and supported in managing and improving continence health, and ensure families and professionals have the tools to support children and young people confidently.



'Talking to you now, you have made me realise that things are completely different with my son and I now have a plan. I'm so grateful that I had tears in my eyes knowing this could work. I can't believe I didn't know you existed until now!'

– National Continence Helpline caller, February 2025.

²⁰ Continence Health Australia. *Incontinence in children*, 2022.

²¹ A., Yang, S.S. and Nevés, T. (2016), [The standardization of terminology of lower urinary tract function in children and adolescents: Update report from the standardization committee of the International Children's Continence Society](#). *Neurology and Urodynamics*, 35: 471–481.

²² Heron J, Grzeda MT, von Gontard A, Wright A, Joinson C. Trajectories of urinary incontinence in childhood and bladder and bowel symptoms in adolescence: prospective cohort study. *BMJ Open*. 2017 Mar 14;7(3):e014238. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-014238. PMID: 28292756; PMCID: PMC5353296.

A note on LGBTIQ+ communities

While we acknowledge that LGBTIQ+ communities experience unique challenges in accessing health care including continence health care, we have not identified this group as a formal priority at this stage due to current capacity constraints. This decision does not diminish the importance of inclusive care for LGBTIQ+ people; rather, it reflects a phased approach to ensure impact and sustainability as we build capacity over time.

We are committed to using gender-inclusive and affirming language and ensuring our materials and training reflect best practice in inclusive health communication. This approach helps create safe, respectful environments for all individuals, regardless of gender identity or expression.

Consumers and carers

Continence Health Australia partners with consumers, carers and the public to amplify lived experience and start conversations about continence health. Our Continence Consumer Network and Consumer Advisory Committee ensure lived experience is embedded in resource and program design. National campaigns such as World Continence Week spark conversations and raise awareness, ensuring people across Australia feel informed, connected and confident in managing their continence health. We also celebrate the vital role of carers through our annual Carer of the Year Award, recognising outstanding dedication and contribution to continence care.



We will also extend collaboration with organisations such as Carers Australia, MS Australia, Wounds Australia, Movember, BEAT Bladder Cancer, Dementia Australia and others to cross-promote events, programs and resources aimed at consumers and informal carers.

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‘You have no idea how much this [information] is helping me. I did not know about this service and have been caring for my granddaughter for over 10 years. This is so helpful, thanks again.’

– National Continence Helpline caller, June 2025

Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
Public health priority groups	1.52	1.53	1.52	4.57

Building a skilled continence health workforce

Education and training for excellence in continence health

Training the next generation of continence health professionals is imperative as demand for their expertise continues to grow, while the workforce shrinks due to an ageing nursing population. As the peak body for bladder and bowel control health, Continence Health Australia is addressing this challenge by driving professional growth through fit-for-purpose initiatives including:

- continuing professional development opportunities
- tailored educational events
- strategic partnerships
- the Australia and New Zealand Continence Journal (ANZCJ).

While our programs deliver strong results, growing consumer demand means we must do more to ensure the health workforce is equipped to meet future needs. To achieve the goal of maximising positive continence health outcomes we are focusing on 5 priority actions:

- educating health professionals to recognise and proactively support patients with or at risk of developing incontinence
- expanding participation in our programs by allied health professionals to strengthen a truly multi-disciplinary approach to continence care
- integrating continence education into vocational and tertiary health courses to ensure early career professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise and address continence health challenges experienced by patients
- embedding culturally responsive continence care across our education offering
- increasing consumer confidence in continence assessment and management processes.

Continuing professional development opportunities

These continuing professional development opportunities aim to build a skilled, credentialled workforce equipped to deliver evidence-based continence care through targeted education, training and sector-wide collaboration.

Priority actions include:

- upskilling registered nurses with a postgraduate level course complemented by the recognition of their speciality with an associated credentialing program, to ensure increased numbers of trained, competent nurse continence specialists to strengthen the skilled continence workforce
- educating and equipping general practitioners (GPs) to identify and proactively support patients with or at risk of developing incontinence with evidence-based care
- reviewing and upgrading online professional development modules for GPs, nurses and allied health professionals to ensure the breadth of workers in the sector have the skills and knowledge to effectively manage and treat incontinence and promote continence health across priority groups
- collaborating with vocational and tertiary institutions to embed our online modules within relevant health qualifications.

Tailored education events

Our National Continence Health Conference and state-based Professional Development Days provide vital opportunities for health professionals to learn, collaborate and access the latest evidence-based treatments and technologies to strengthen practice.



Priority actions include:

- increasing access for rural and remote professionals by providing scholarships to ensure equitable access for health professionals who are often the sole continence professionals in their communities
- delivering state-based professional development days in every state tailored to address gaps in service delivery and local needs, and facilitating networking opportunities that promote collaboration and strengthen professional connections across regions
- supporting Special Interest Groups that enable targeted initiatives that respond to specific fields or geographic challenges
- offering accessible online learning through webinar series to extend reach and support ongoing professional development.

“

‘When I applied for the scholarship to attend this conference, my primary expectation was to gain a deeper understanding of contemporary continence management practices and the tools to better serve my patients in remote areas. These expectations were not only met but exceeded. The opportunity to learn from experts, exchange ideas with colleagues, and explore new evidence-based treatments has directly impacted my practice.’

– National Continence Health Conference Scholarship recipient, May 2025

Strategic partnerships

Cementing continence within health curriculum at both the vocational and tertiary levels, including the HumanAbility Jobs and Skills Council, will ensure early career graduates enter the workforce with the knowledge and skills to identify and manage at-risk patients. We will work with formal education institutions to provide access to our education modules within their curricula.

Critical partnerships will include:

- the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) as an approved provider of their CPD education and other CPD Homes for General Practitioners
- health professional associations such as the RACGP, Continence Nurses’ Society Australia (CoNSA), the Pharmacy Guild and the Australian Physiotherapy Association to champion our education initiatives among their members to build knowledge and capacity
- relevant vocational and tertiary institutions.

The Australia and New Zealand Continence Journal

The Australia and New Zealand Continence Journal (ANZCJ) has provided a free platform for health professionals and early career academics to disseminate research findings related to continence care. For over 30 years authors have been mentored and provided with constructive reviewer feedback about their work, with the goal of producing robust manuscripts that add value to national knowledge about continence care.

Continued funding ensures this vital resource remains open access, making evidence on Australian and New Zealand populations freely available online to a global audience, and empowering emerging health professionals to stay at the forefront of evidence-based best practice.



Continence Health Australia – funding request	Year 1 \$m	Year 2 \$m	Year 3 \$m	Total \$m
Building a skilled continence health workforce	1.45	1.43	1.46	4.34

Continence Health Australia is uniquely positioned to deliver the National Continence Program and the 4 additional initiatives outlined in this submission, drawing on nationally recognised expertise, established infrastructure and trusted relationships across the health system. We welcome the opportunity to continue to work in partnership with the Australian Government to expand the program's reach, strengthen its impact and deliver improved outcomes for individuals and the health system.



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