

MEDIA RELEASE

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Federal budget invests in aged care but still no action on continence care

The Continence Foundation welcomes the investments to the health and aged care sector made in the 2022-23 Budget, however, there remains a lack of action to support the millions of Australians impacted by incontinence.

"Incontinence affects more than half of Australians, and 50% of those living with incontinence report that it affects their mental health," says Rowan Cockerell, CEO of the Continence Foundation of Australia. "Urgent action is needed because we know that the number of Australians living with incontinence will be more than 6.2 million by 2030," she says.

The Foundation welcomes the investment to establish a National Advisory Council for Women's Health to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the Women's Health Strategy. Women make up 80 per cent of people who report living with incontinence, emphasising that promoting awareness around incontinence should be a key action within the Strategy.

The additional funding of \$468.3 million to continue to implement the Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety will ensure progress to improve the aged care system. However, any investment in addressing the recommendations from the Royal Commission must ensure that it includes a focus on continence care for Australians living in residential aged care. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety heard firsthand the devastating impacts on people's lives because of inadequate continence care.

Currently, primary health care professionals and people working with populations at high risk of incontinence, including doctors, nurses, midwives, and personal care workers have been shown to be inadequately prepared in their training to provide effective continence-related care. Commitments to strengthening the healthcare workforce are important to ensure everyone has access to quality care.

While the investments in the Budget to address health workforce in rural and regional areas and the aged care sector, are welcome, it is essential that training and education of the whole healthcare workforce includes continence care and management.

We know that improved workforce capacity will improve the quality of life of people living with incontinence; reduce preventable health complications and unnecessary hospitalisations and delay entry to residential aged care.

The Foundation will continue to advocate for investment in continence care, management, and prevention. To support people living with incontinence, their carer and health professionals, the immediate priorities for action are:

1. National leadership to set the agenda for continence care and support through systemic change and evidenced based support and care
2. Increase the availability of specialist continence services and trained health professionals
3. Build the capability of the workforce across health, ageing and disability sectors to support people with incontinence.

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

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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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