

POSITION STATEMENT

BINS 4 Blokes

February 2020

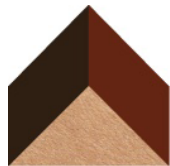


The Continenence Foundation of Australia has developed this statement with its partners in response to the need for boys and men to be able to hygienically and discreetly dispose of incontinence products.



**Continenace
Foundation
of Australia**

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About this position statement

This position statement draws on the latest evidence and provides recommendations to support the case for the provision of bins for the disposal of incontinence products in male public toilets.

The Continence Foundation of Australia has developed this statement with its supporters in response to the need for boys and men to be able to hygienically and discreetly dispose of incontinence products.

About the Continence Foundation of Australia

Since 1989, the Continence Foundation of Australia has represented the interests of Australians affected by, or at risk of, bladder and bowel control problems and acts as an advocate for their interests.

The Continence Foundation of Australia promotes bladder and bowel control by:

- working with consumers, professionals, industry and government
- facilitating access to continence support services
- providing evidence based information and advice
- building the capacity and capability of the workforce
- supporting research to achieve the Foundation's objectives.

For more information about the Continence Foundation of Australia, visit continence.org.au

Key messages

At least **1.34 million** Australian boys and men are living with urinary or faecal incontinence today¹.

- Incontinence is not just a health issue of older men:
 - Over a third (**36%**) of men living with urinary and faecal incontinence are under the age of 50, and
 - **2.3%** of boys and young men living with incontinence are aged between 15 and 19 years¹.
- One in six men in Australia are at risk of developing prostate cancer by the **age of 85**². The risk of prostate cancer increases with age. Urinary incontinence rates following radical prostatectomy are high.
 - When studies follow men who have undergone this surgery, they find urinary incontinence rates of 33.3-92% after one month which drops to 3.2-12% after 12 months^{3,4,5,6}.
- There are many risk factors for incontinence in men and, although risk increases with age, incontinence can develop across their lifespan⁷.
- Incontinence is stigmatised⁸.
- Incontinence can lead to social isolation, mental health issues (depression) and reduced quality of life^{8,9,10}.
- A lack of facilities to dispose of incontinence products can mean a constant worry of public embarrassment and can discourage men from leaving the house, leading to social isolation⁸.
- Having to carry around disposal bags and waste can be resolved with the provision of disposal bins for incontinence products in male public toilets.
- Failure to provide adequate disposal facilities for incontinence products may lead to them being flushed down toilets or disposed of inappropriately¹¹.
- There are inconsistent Standards and Codes of Practice around Australia regarding the provision of disposal bins for incontinence products in male public toilets^{12,13}.
- Being effectively supported in the community enables greater social participation for men.

Recommendations

We call for:

- The installation of disposal bins for incontinence products in all male public toilets in Australia.
- The development of nationally-consistent Standards and Codes of Practice for toilet facilities to include the installation of disposal bins for incontinence products in all male toilets.

1.34 million

Australian boys and men
experience incontinence

A study of Australian men with urinary incontinence found¹⁷:



57%

intentionally kept
accidents secret from
those close to them



50%

avoided situations
where they could not
access a toilet easily



28%

avoid socialising,
except with close
family and friends

BACKGROUND

What is incontinence?

Incontinence describes any accidental or involuntary loss of urine from the bladder (urinary incontinence) or bowel motion or wind from the bowel (faecal incontinence). Incontinence is a widespread condition that ranges in severity from 'just a small leak' to complete loss of bladder or bowel control¹⁴.

How many boys and men live with incontinence?

There is a perception that incontinence rarely affects men and when it does it is perceived as a normal consequence of ageing, but this is not true.

- **1.34 million Australian boys and men are living with urinary or faecal incontinence**
- **36%** of men living with urinary and faecal incontinence are under the age of 50, and
- **2.3%** of boys and young men living with urinary and faecal incontinence are aged between 15–19¹.

What are the risk factors?

There are a number of factors that may contribute to incontinence in boys and men, these are:

- some congenital abnormalities and behavioural conditions in childhood
- constipation
- some medications
- prostate problems
- post-prostate cancer surgery
- post-bowel cancer surgery
- post-bowel, bladder and prostate radiation treatment
- high BMIs
- chronic conditions (e.g. diabetes, cardiovascular disease)
- impaired mobility and cognitive impairment (e.g. stroke, dementia, arthritis)⁷
- disabilities, and spinal cord lesions (e.g. spina bifida, spinal cord injuries)⁵.

Incontinence is stigmatised and can reduce quality of life

People living with incontinence are stigmatised. The stigmatisation of incontinence can lead to withdrawal from work, social, physical and sexual activities⁸, or concealment of their incontinence all of which adds to psychological distress⁴ and mental health issues^{9,10}. When the Foundation surveyed general practitioners, **69%** stated men never or rarely brought up continence issues in standard consultations¹⁶.

There is a clear link between incontinence and depression, with an Australian review finding the prevalence of comorbid depression in the presence of urinary incontinence is between **20 and 43%**⁹. Incontinence and depression independently reduce quality of life⁶. An Australian study revealed that when they occur together there is an additive effect to the detriment of both physical and mental health¹⁰.

A study of Australian men with urinary incontinence found:

- **76%** actively located toilets when arriving at an unfamiliar place
- **57%** intentionally kept accidents secret from those close to them
- **50%** avoided situations where they could not access a toilet easily
- **47%** reported they avoid situations where they were likely to leak
- **28%** avoid socialising, except with close family and friends
- **27%** stated they stayed at home as a precautionary measure¹⁷.

Urinary incontinence reduces the quality of life of men by increasing social isolation and reducing energy and physical mobility¹⁸. Men living with faecal incontinence also experience a reduction in their quality of life¹⁹. Men cope by accepting faecal incontinence as normal, but their experience was one of 'secret resignation'²⁰.

One in six men in Australia are at risk of developing prostate cancer by the age of 85². Urinary incontinence rates following radical prostatectomy are high. When studies follow men who have undergone this surgery, they find urinary incontinence rates of 33.3-92% after one month which drops to 3.2-12% after 12 months^{3,4,5,6}.

Following prostate cancer treatment, men with urinary incontinence found:

- occurrence to be sudden
- they struggled with acceptance
- it negatively impacted on their quality of life²¹.

Coping with incontinence and returning to regular activities and work after prostate cancer surgery was a high priority for men and their partners²².

Clearly, being supported in the community enables men to participate more fully. Increased accessibility to disposal bins for incontinence products in male public toilets is likely to increase the capacity of men to participate in activities and, in doing so, could help to reduce their social isolation and improve their quality of life.

Disposing of incontinence products: environmental impacts

The provision of disposal bins for incontinence products in male public toilets is not only a social justice issue, but also an environmental issue.

If men are unable to easily dispose of their incontinence products in designated bins, this may lead to these products being disposed of inappropriately such as in general waste bins representing a potential contaminant or infection risk in a public area or flushed down the toilet.

The devastating environmental consequences that occur when single-use plastic “unflushables” (incontinence and sanitary products, wet wipes and nappies etc.) are flushed down toilets has reached the point where local government authorities are responding by calling for the provision of bins in male public toilets for the disposal of incontinence products¹¹. The London Assembly Environment Committee has investigated the impact noting that, in the UK, there was no legal requirement to provide bins for disposal of unflushables in male public toilets. Upon conclusion of this investigation they made several recommendations including:

Recommendation 8: The GLA (Greater London Authority) Group should provide men’s bins in its men’s toilets for unflushable single-use products and encourage other public and private sector organisations to adopt this approach¹¹.

The widespread availability of disposal bins in male public toilets could also minimise the detrimental impact of used incontinence products on the environment.

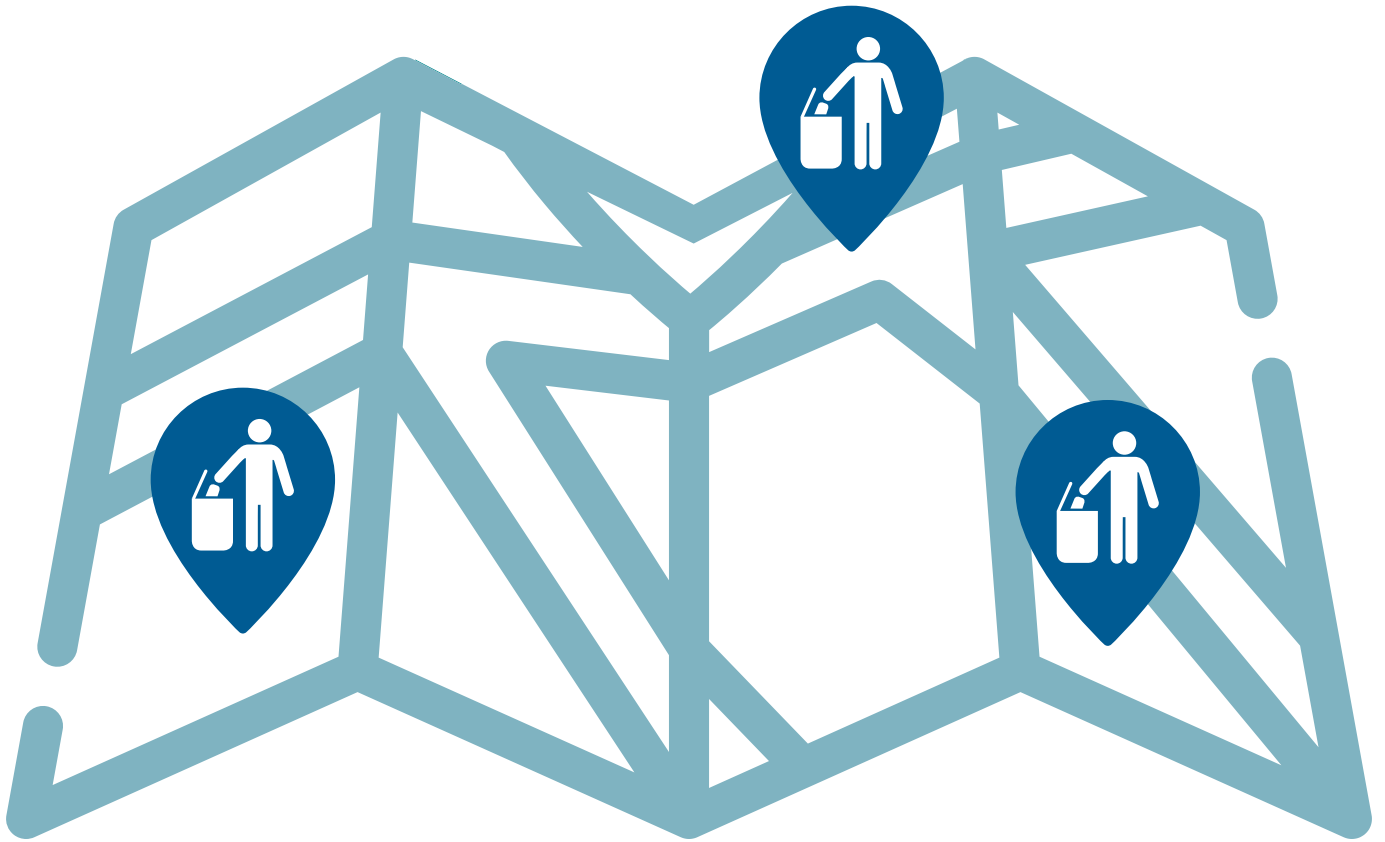
Standards and Codes of Practice

The mandated design of toilets and required amenities are detailed in numerous Standards and Codes of Practice across the States and Territories. Currently, these Standards and Codes of Practice are inconsistent regarding the installation of disposal bins for incontinence products.

Consequently, there is no consistent requirement for the provision of suitable receptacles for the disposal of incontinence pads in male toilets. This is highlighted by two separate examples of Codes of Practices. The first from South Australia, SA Health: Code of Practice for The Provision of Facilities for Sanitation and Personal Hygiene 2018¹², which mandates the requirement for suitable receptacles for the disposal of incontinence products. The second from Safe Work Australia, Managing the work environment and facilities: Code of Practice 2018¹³, which does not mention incontinence products, but does mandate the need for suitable receptacles for the disposal of sanitary products for female employees.

Internationally, progress has been made with Germany passing legislation in 2013 that directs that at least one disposal bin for incontinence products be placed in men’s toilet facilities. Additionally, a list of establishments that have placed disposal bins in men’s toilets and marked them accordingly on the toilet doors are listed on the Hygienebehälter in Herrentoiletten website²³. This allows men to locate disposal bins for incontinence products throughout Germany.

The National Public Toilet Map



In Australia, as part of the National Continence Program, the Australian Federal Government funds the National Public Toilet Map²⁴ (commonly referred to as the Toilet Map). This is extremely useful for people with incontinence, travellers and young families as it shows the location of more than 19,000 public and private public toilet facilities across Australia. The Toilet Map can be accessed via a downloadable phone app or website. This presents a great opportunity for the National Public Toilet Map to also highlight the location of toilets which have men's disposal bins installed in a similar manner to what Germany has done.

Recommendations

We recognise and agree that the provision of bins for the disposal of incontinence products in male public toilets will improve the quality of life of boys and men living with incontinence.

To support boys and men with incontinence, we recommend:

- The installation of disposal bins for incontinence products in male public toilets in Australia.
- The development of nationally-consistent Standards and Codes of Practice for toilet facilities which includes the installation of disposal bins for incontinence products in all male toilets.

SA Council leads the way in continence care for men



The South Australian council of Gawler, in the Barossa Valley, is leading the way for local government by installing Incontinence product disposal bins in their male public toilets.

Inadequate methods of disposing of incontinence products can mean a constant worry of public embarrassment and demotivate men from doing everyday things like venturing from the house. Having to carry around disposal bags and waste can be resolved with discreet sanitary bins in toilets.

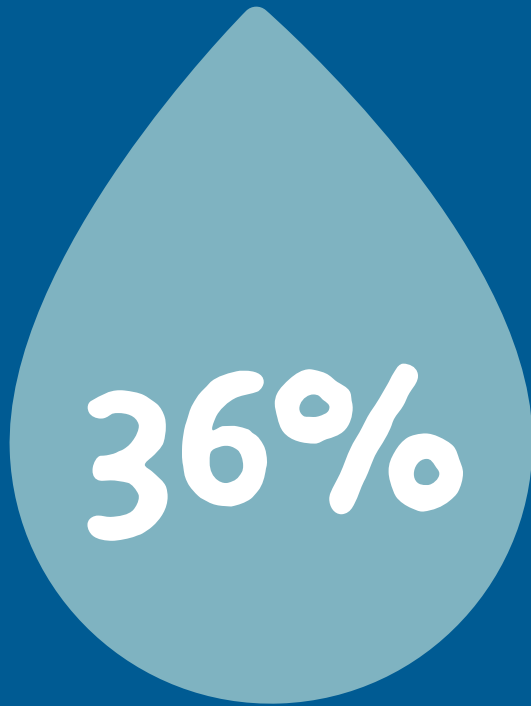
Gawler Council has recognised the immense impact a small step like installing bins will have for the community.

When the Council was considering the motion, each councillor was given a pack with an incontinence pad, disposable bag, wipes etc. so they could see what a man may need to dispose of. This helped them to conceptualise what people with incontinence must contend with.

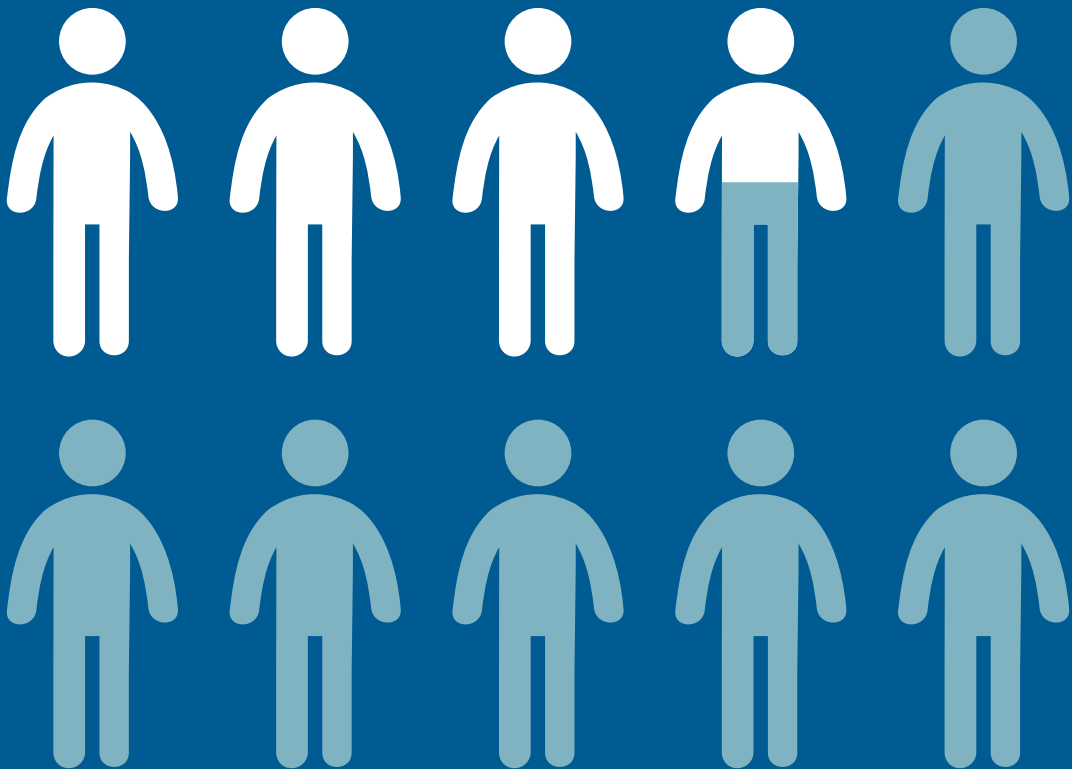
Mayor of Gawler Karen Redman said that the compelling continence proposal earned a positive reaction from both the council and community.

"There was unanimous support from councillors to install the bins. Members of the community I have spoken to were surprised it wasn't already in place," Cr Redman said.

[continence.org.au/news.php/555/council-shows-continence-care-for-men](https://www.continence.org.au/news.php/555/council-shows-continence-care-for-men)



Of men living with urinary and faecal incontinence are under the age of 50¹





**Continence
Foundation
of Australia**

Further information

Continence Foundation of Australia website

continence.org.au

The Continence Foundation of Australia is the national peak body promoting bladder and bowel health. The Continence Foundation of Australia's vision is to have a community free of the stigma of incontinence. We provide information on funding, referral and products. We also offer free resources for individuals, carers and professionals to help treat bladder and bowel control problems.

National Continence Helpline

1800 33 00 66

The National Continence Helpline is a free telephone advisory service staffed by a team of continence nurse advisors who provide information, education and advice to callers with bladder and/or bowel problems which may include incontinence, constipation, failure of bladder to empty or who are caring for someone with such conditions.

The Helpline also provides information and advice to health professionals.

The Helpline is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and available to anyone living in Australia. It operates 8am-8pm (AEST) Monday to Friday.

Continence Foundation of Australia information for men

continence.org.au/pages/men.html

Continence Foundation of Australia information for men following prostate surgery

continence.org.au/pages/continence-management-following-prostate-surgery.html

Consumer advocacy in the news

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continence.org.au