



NSA flushed with recommendations for NSW Public Toilet Inquiry

5 December 2024

National Seniors Australia (NSA) is recommending an improvement to the National Public Toilet Map and incorporating dementia-friendly design principles as part of its [submission to the NSW Public Toilet Inquiry](#).

NSA CEO Chris Grice said it is critical toilet facilities that cater for specific needs are available and accessible for seniors, and others, to ensure they feel comfortable out in the community. Providing accessible and ambulant toilets as well as ensuring people know they exist, where they are, and when they are available are also important.

According to the ABS, almost 17% of people in NSW live with a disability. The Continence Foundation of Australia estimates one-in-four Australians are incontinent. Additionally, an ageing population will need higher levels of accessible and ambulant toilets.

“People don’t tend to think about public toilet facilities until they need them. Many people take their availability and accessibility for granted but for a lot of people, where public toilets are located, how to access them, and ease of use can cause real angst and impede people’s decisions to go out,” Mr Grice said.

“According to UK research, which we assume could be reflected in Australia, 20% of people are deterred from leaving home due to a lack of knowledge of available toilets, 43% are deterred from leaving their home if they have a condition which increases their need for toilet facilities and 56% restrict their fluid intake due to a lack of toilets. This can lead to urinary tract health issues and is concerning.

“People need accessible and ambulant toilet facilities and to know where these facilities are and when they are available, which is why we recommend improving the data in the National Toilet Map. This knowledge will also help to inform an expansion of public toilets in underserved areas.

“Sufficient signage, including direction and distance, also helps people locate public toilets, and serves to reduce digital exclusion from this information.

“With an ageing population, more people with cognitive decline and dementia will live in the community. Public toilet design should consider both physical and mental accessibility. Some design elements can take from aged care design, such as: brighter light while using matte finishes to reduce glare and shadows, contrasting colours, simple layouts, clear signage and non-slip floors. Some other design elements may require dedicated toilets, such as familiar fittings and fixtures (including handles, locks, buttons, and taps).

“There are wider community benefits to having reliable, maintained, and hygienic public toilets. Several features that do not require substantial changes to buildings include providing sanitary bins, sometimes referred to as male incontinence bins in men’s toilets, automatic toilet seats, disposable toilet seat covers, cleaning sprays and wipes.

“Our recommendations to the NSW Public Toilet Inquiry are about making improvements at minimum cost with maximum impact so public toilet facilities are as easy to use as possible. We hope they are given due consideration.”

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