



## THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

### Minister for Ageing

#### MEDIA RELEASE

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#### Clearer Guidelines for The Continence Aids Assistance Scheme Designed to Help Families

The Australian Government has simplified the application form for the Continence Aids Assistance Scheme – a program that helps people with the cost of pads and other personal continence products.

Families, people with incontinence and their carers are now able to access the assistance with greater ease following the Australian Government's decision to update and improve the necessary application form.

The program (which was expanded last year) now includes a greater range of eligible conditions – both with neurological and other causes for incontinence - such as children with **Downs syndrome**, and those with developmental delays associated with **Aspergers syndrome** or **Autism spectrum disorder**. (Last year, across the country, 4,197 children under the age of 16 received assistance under the scheme.)

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot launched the updated form at the 17<sup>TH</sup> National Conference on Incontinence in Hobart – an event sponsored under the Government's National Continence Management Strategy.

"This is a commonsense and fair measure to make the application process easier," Mrs Elliot said.

"This change will assist families with a child with Downs syndrome, Aspergers syndrome and Autism spectrum disorder to receive much needed assistance."

Nationally, four million Australians are affected by some form of incontinence.

The decision to improve the form followed concerns from families, advocates and health professionals on the need for additional information on eligible conditions for the scheme and updated guidelines for health professionals following its expansion last year.

"Parents whose children have developmental delays causing incontinence have told me that these changes will improve their access to assistance," Mrs Elliot said.

The program now helps around 50,000 people including more than 1,400 in Tasmania.

It is also set to increase support to around 54,000 by the middle of next year.

It provides an annual subsidy for continence products of up to \$479.40 – an amount that is now indexed annually.

The updated form is based on specialist medical advice and is now available online.

“This is an important step for many families,” Mrs Elliot said. “This clearer information will streamline the process of people applying for assistance and is about supporting families during these tough times.

“Incontinence can greatly reduce a person’s quality of life by restricting their social and family activities and job opportunities,” Mrs Elliot said.

The valuable and supportive scheme, which assists people who have permanent and severe incontinence to meet some of the costs of continence products, was expanded last year to include people aged five years or over whose incontinence is caused by an eligible neurological condition.

The seven neurological condition categories are:

- Spina Bifida and Syringomyelia
- Cerebral Palsy
- Intellectual Disability
- Paraplegia and Quadriplegia
- Acquired Neurological Conditions
- Degenerative Neurological Diseases, and
- Bladder (and bowel) Innervation Disorders.

The expanded scheme also allows people with a Centrelink Pensioner Concession Card access to the scheme if their incontinence was caused by other conditions.

For further information on the **Continence Aids Assistance Scheme** visit the Intouch web site at [www.intouchdirect.com.au/healthcare/caas.htm](http://www.intouchdirect.com.au/healthcare/caas.htm) or call Intouch on 1300 366 455 or the Department of Health and Ageing on 1800 807 487.

Information on the **National Continence Management Strategy** is available from the Australian Government’s bladder and bowel web site [www.bladderbowel.gov.au](http://www.bladderbowel.gov.au).

The **National Continence Helpline** is staffed by a team of Continence Nurse Advisors, who provide prompt, confidential and professional information and advice to callers from 8.00am to 8.00pm, Monday to Friday, on 1800 33 00 66.

The **National Public Toilet Map** is available online at [www.toiletmap.gov.au](http://www.toiletmap.gov.au).

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280