

**Submission
No 29**

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC TOILETS

Organisation: Share the Dignity

Date Received: 31 October 2024



share*the*dignity

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Introduction to Share the Dignity

Share the Dignity is a national charity dedicated to achieving menstrual equity, ensuring everyone is afforded the dignity in life so many of us take for granted. Since 2015, when Share the Dignity Founder Rochelle Courtenay first learned of the urgent need for period products among many Australians, we have championed access, education, and the dismantling of menstrual stigma. Working with over 3,000 charities, we have donated more than 5 million period products, but the need remains vast. Our Bloody Big Surveys (2021,2024) are the largest bodies of data the world has ever seen on menstruation, and they show the compelling inequalities menstruation brings about for Australian menstruators. The 2024 survey underscored the need for equitable access to period products with data revealing that 64% of women, girls and those who menstruate struggled to afford period products – a figure that rises among Aboriginal and Indigenous communities, those living with a disability or chronic condition and gender diverse communities.

Through initiatives like our Dignity Vending Machines (DVMs), we aim to address menstrual inequalities by making menstrual products freely available in a dignified way in locations where they are most needed, such as schools, community centres, hospitals, and public spaces.

Addressing the Inquiry

Share the Dignity is advocating for the inclusion of the provision of period products through the Dignity Vending Machines in public toilets across New South Wales. We are addressing the following aspects of the inquiry:

Provision, design, accessibility, and inclusivity of public toilets: We believe public toilets should cater to all members of society, ensuring equitable access to menstrual products. This includes not only public spaces, but also private premises accessed by the public, helping to address period poverty in an inclusive and accessible manner.

Regulation and funding: To support this vision, we advocate for new standards, guidelines, and funding models that ensure public toilets are adequately equipped with period products through the DVMs. This would require a regulatory framework and potential legislative changes to guarantee consistent access to these essential services across New South Wales.

Access to Period Products and Sanitary Bins in EVERY public toilet is a basic human right and health necessity. Access to period products is not just about convenience, it's about dignity, hygiene, and public health. Every person who menstruates deserves access to clean and affordable products and having them available in every toilet ensures that no one is forced to go without. Just as we wouldn't expect bathrooms without toilet paper or soap, it's crucial to recognise period products as essential supplies that should be universally accessible.

By providing these products in every toilet, we normalise menstruation and break the silence around it. This not only benefits those who menstruate but also contributes to building a more equitable and inclusive society. Placing products in all public toilets helps to

combat period poverty and ensures that no one is disadvantaged because of something natural.

Sanitary bins are equally essential to ensure proper disposal of period products. Without them, users may resort to flushing products, which can cause plumbing issues and environmental damage. Ensuring every toilet has access to sanitary bins supports public health and contributes to environmentally responsible behaviour.

By installing period product dispensers and sanitary bins in every toilet in Australia, and partnering with a proven, socially driven organisation like Share the Dignity, we can create a future where no one has to face the indignity of being unprepared for their period. We're not just providing products we're championing menstrual equity for all.

[View the results of over 150,000 respondents on our 2024 Bloody Big Survey](#), the worlds largest body of data on menstruation.

Share the Dignity stands ready to provide evidence at a hearing on the critical need for free menstrual products in public toilets. Our expertise and data underscore the significant impact this provision can have on ensuring dignity and equality for all who menstruate.

Sincerely,

Rochelle Courtenay
Founder and Managing Director