

## TOILETS AND ENSUITES

# How can toilets be located and designed within a residential care home to enable independent use by a person living with dementia?

Some people living with dementia have difficulty using the toilet simply because they cannot recognise or find the toilet in time, which can result in discomfort and embarrassment.

This means that, especially within residential care homes, it needs to be very obvious how to find the toilet. If the toilet can be easily found when required, it will reduce the stress and anxiety for residents and help them to be able to continue using the toilet independently.

A toilet needs to be located near the communal areas and within the bedroom area, and residents need to be able to see the toilet door and/or pan as the primary way of prompting them to use it.



When a toilet room and toilet pan are clearly visible, whether through design features or location, it is more likely to be used independently by a person living with dementia.



### What you can do now

- Position signs leading to and on toilet doors so that they can be seen from a distance.
- Use signs that combine familiar words, pictures or symbols.
- Provide door features (e.g. colour, finish) that stand out from other doors.
- Make sure the route to the toilet remains clear for mobility aids.
- Locate the toilet paper holder and call bell within reach.
- Consider using a contrasting colour for the toilet seat if the resident requires it.



### What you can plan for the future

- Before building or renovating, consult a design professional with knowledge and experience in implementing the principles of dementia friendly design – this should avoid the selection of commercial or institutional fixtures and fittings.
- Locate the toilet pan so it can be seen as soon as the ensuite door is opened, however, in communal areas avoid locating the toilet pan so that if the door is left open resident privacy is not compromised.
- Avoid strong contrast between different floor finishes (e.g. corridor to toilet, bedroom to ensuite) as these can be perceived as a step or hole, discouraging entry.
- Contrast the fixtures and fittings including the toilet seat, toilet pan, grab rails and vanity.
- Provide a mirror that can be removed or concealed if necessary.

**Key Design Principles:** Principle 3 Allow people to see and be seen, Principle 5 Optimise helpful stimulation  
<https://dta.com.au/resources/environmental-design-resources-introduction>

**Aged Care Quality Standards:** Standard 5 Requirement (c) Furniture, fittings and equipment in the service environment to be safe, clean, well maintained and suitable for the consumer.

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