

**Submission  
No 34**

## **INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC TOILETS**

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Thank you for the opportunity to make suggestions in regard to public toilets.

My experience covers 2, key areas.

Firstly I am a retired NPWS park manager and I was responsible for the provision and maintenance of public toilets in many national parks.

Second, I have travelled extensively throughout Australia and utilised public toilets in many national park and other. camping areas and roadside and town toilets.

A number of issues are very common.

1. There is no consistency as to whether toilet paper is provided. My view is that in this day and age toilet paper must definitely be provided. I note that even within agencies or councils there is no consistency'. Even in large high profile national parks some locations provide paper and some do not. Surely this can be improved upon.

2. The standard of cleaning and maintenance of public toilets varies hugely from very poor to excellent. If one lifts up the toilet seat it is evident in at least 50% of cases that little if any attempt is given to clean the underside of the seat and the top of the toilet pan.

Where unisex toilets are provided this problem is usually worse.

Many toilets in bush land areas and along roadsides don't have flushing systems however the inside of these long drop type toilets need special cleaning with high pressure water. I am always impressed with how the staff at Kosciuszko National Park clean the inside of such toilets at places near Jindabyne such as Thredbo Diggings , the Lower Snowy and Island Bend. These toilets are managed at a very high standard and show what is possible to achieve when flushing systems are not available.

So my message is that in many cases a much higher standard of cleaning is required at a lot of towns, roadsides and bush land areas.

South Australia and Western Australia often provide a bucket with water and a brush so that uses of non flush toilets can assist to keep them clean and this system works.

3. There seems to be little consistency in toilet design and construction to withstand vandalism. Surely there is a great opportunity to come up with some robust cost effective designs to lessen the burden on the public purse and to withstand vandalism. I live near Jindabyne and I am appalled at the level of vandalism that is inflicted on our public toilets in and near town. So many Councils suffer similar problems. Perhaps we need some robust design security cameras to help deter vandals.

4. Safety must be a higher priority. Too many public toilets have inadequate lighting and their design is poor. It is much safer if all cubicles have individual doors that open into an open area rather than a confined corridor. Doors should open outward so if someone is sick or injured responders can easily get the person out and assist.

5. In many situations there is a lack of toilets for females and this leads to long queues. This is especially the case at events. We need to recognise this and provide many more toilets for females. The trend towards unisex toilets should be avoided as typically toilets used by males are more likely to be filthy.

6. Most non flushing toilets have vent systems to help reduce odours. My observations suggest both a lack of consistency in vent design and in many cases no vent maintenance. Some toilets have whirlwind type rotating vents but it is quite often the case that these are not functioning. An effective vent system is the provision of an external vertical poly pipe. Some are painted black to cause a draft as the pipe heats up in the sun but others are white. I am unsure if this is a deliberate design issue or representative of lack of implementation of the most efficient design.

7.If government is serious and wants to see noticeable improvement I strongly suggest the introduction of an audit system so that standards can be set and monitored. We should be aiming for a much higher standard of design, safety , maintenance and cleaning than is typically the case.

I thank you for taking this issue seriously.