

17 March 2023

Embrace the Present but Plan for the Future

National Advance Care Planning Week is from 20 March to 26 March 2023. It reminds and encourages us all, no matter our age or current state of health, to discuss our future health care plans with our loved ones and health professionals.

The campaign is increasing community awareness around the importance of advance care planning to ensure your end-of-life care wishes are known and honoured when the time comes.

Advance care planning in NSW involves appointing an enduring guardian and completing an Advance Care Directive, which is a legal document that lets people know your health care and treatment wishes. According to Advance Care Planning Australia's [2020 report](#), only 25% of Australians have a legal directive in place.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, said that it's a misconception that only the elderly or those with health issues need to consider their end-of-life care plans.

"It's important for people of all ages to consider their plans and discuss them openly, because you just never know what might happen. Some people feel uncomfortable thinking and talking about death and dying. However, thinking about your plans, and having discussions about them, are crucial to ensure that your wishes are clear before you are in a situation, either from injury or illness, where you can no longer make decisions for yourself."

"If a person is unable to make decisions about their own health, they will need someone else, like a family member or close friend, to make these decisions for them. These types of decisions might include how and where they would like to die, or whether they're open to organ donation. If this information is not known, it can be incredibly difficult for loved ones to decide, particularly in times of crisis and distress. This can result in decisions that might not align with the person's own wishes had they been able to communicate them," said Ms Reay.

Making sure you have advance care planning conversations can alleviate stress and anxiety for both you and your family. It can also help reduce family conflict around decisions and improve the quality of care received. Lack of planning can result in unnecessary hospitalisations for those who wish to die at home, or dying in ambulances or emergency rooms, rather than in a preferred familiar environment surrounded by loved ones.

"We really encourage everyone to think about their end-of-life care wishes this National Advance Care Planning Week and to discuss them not only with their GP and other health professionals, but their family and friends too," Ms Reay added.

People can upload a completed Advance Care Directive to their My Health Record which can then be viewed by their GP or other registered clinicians with permission.

More information about end-of-life care and advance care planning can be found at www.nbmphn.com.au/Advance-Care-Planning



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