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**NATIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE WEEK A TIME TO PLAN AHEAD
 FOR END OF LIFE CARE**

This week’s National Palliative Care Week (19-25 May) is a time for Australians to plan ahead for their end of life care, and discuss it with their loved ones and health professionals.

“The theme this year is ‘What matters most’, and what can matter more than ensuring that your wishes are known and respected as you enter the final stages of life?” AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today.

“Death, dying, and bereavement are integral – and inevitable - parts of life. However, reflecting on and discussing death can be profoundly confronting and difficult.

“Advance care planning is the best way to plan ahead for end of life care. It ensures you get the care you want, not the care you don’t want, at the end of life, should you lose the capacity to make or communicate decisions.

“It may involve family members, religious advisers, friends, and other people the patient feels should be involved, and can take place in a GP’s surgery or in hospital.

“An advance care plan can be as informal as a verbal instruction, or a formal directive, medical enduring power of attorney, a letter, or an entry in the patient’s medical record.

“Advance care planning should become part of routine clinical practice, so that patients’ wishes and preferences for health care, particularly end of life care, are known and met.

“Open and frank discussion of death and dying, including end of life care options, approach to futile treatment, caring, and bereavement should be encouraged within the profession and in the wider community.”

National Palliative Care Week is supported by the Federal Department of Health to raise awareness of and understanding about palliative care.

For more information, visit the Palliative Care Australia website at <https://palliativecare.org.au/>

The AMA Position Statement on End of Life Care and Advance Care Planning 2014 is at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/end-life-care-and-advance-care-planning-2014>

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