



**FAMILY TIME OVER HOLIDAYS IS A GOOD TIME TO DISCUSS  
 END-OF-LIFE CARE WISHES**

The AMA suggests that the holiday season can be a perfect opportunity for many of us to discuss with their families their future healthcare wishes when they are approaching the end of their lives.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that, while this may not seem the cheeriest conversation to have during the festive season, ensuring your family understands your wishes for end-of-life care can potentially be the greatest gift you give them.

“It can be confusing and devastating for family members, who have to make end-of-life care decisions for a loved one, not knowing what care their loved one would actually want to receive.

“Just as importantly, they need to know what care they do not want to receive should they lose decision-making capacity in the future.

“Making family members aware of your end-of-life care wishes alleviates the burden of uncertainty during an emotional and stressful time. It is much better to have such conversations in a relaxed setting than in the intensive care unit.”

The AMA strongly urges all Australians to undertake advance care planning, a process of planning for your future health and personal care by ensuring your values, beliefs and preferences are known to guide those who will make health care decisions on your behalf, should you lose capacity in the future.

The outcome of planning is an advance care plan that can be recorded in a variety of ways, including an advance care directive, medical enduring power-of-attorney, a letter, an entry in your medical record, or even a verbal instruction.

The Advance Care Planning Australia website is an excellent resource for individuals, families, friends, and carers. It guides people through the process of advance care planning and provides a range of resources, including information on forms and requirements for advance care planning in each State or Territory.

The website also provides important resources for health care professionals, including education and online learning.

“Advance care planning can be done by anyone at any age, regardless of whether you are healthy or experiencing an illness,” Dr Bartone said.

“While everyone should consider advance care planning, it is particularly relevant to those with a chronic illness, a life-limiting illness, are over 75 years of age, or are at risk of losing the capacity to make healthcare decisions.”

The AMA's *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>

The Advance Care Planning Australia website is at <https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au>

## Background

- Advance care planning discussions, and clearly delineating ‘goals of care’, should become a key part of routine healthcare conversations across Australia.
  - If you already have an advance care plan in place, this is the perfect opportunity to revisit it to ensure it continues to reflect your preferences and goals of care, which may change as you get older or as a serious health condition progresses.
  - Your GP, in particular, can assist with the planning process by discussing your current and possible future health situations, helping you to clearly articulate your preferences, and regularly reviewing your advance care plan with you.
  - Always ensure you alert your GP and substitute decision-makers to any changes in your plan.
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