

MEDIA RELEASE

Palliative Care Australia Inc.

Quality care at the end of life



Palliative
Care
Australia

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Connect with Palliative Care Australia

EMBARGO THURSDAY, 29 MAY 2014

10 tips to die the way you want – because #YODO

- *Author and healthcare ethicist provides 10 tips to take control of your death*
- *Every Australian needs a plan to die #YODO (you only die once)*
- *Health services in Australia are like a 'jigsaw with no picture'*
- *A few tips can guide you through the jumble*

"We haven't cured death; and we're not likely to, so why don't we plan for one of life's certainties?" Dr Sarah Winch told the National Palliative Care Week launch event in Parliament House this morning.

Dr Winch, author of the *Best Death Possible: A Guide to Dying in Australia*, shared 10 tips to take control of your death, gathered from her personal experience in caring for her husband, who was confronted with terminal cancer.

"Dying shouldn't be left to chance," said Dr Winch. After a catastrophic diagnosis that leaves you feeling flattened and powerless – you can assume control.

"When we feel like all hope is gone a new hope emerges; a 'good' death according to our wishes and beliefs.

"Each and every Australian needs a plan to die – a plan that sets out what you want and guides your loved ones and health care professionals."

In considering how you would like to spend your final days, weeks, months, reflect on:

1. **What does life mean to me** – Consider what quality of life means to you by writing a few sentences on what is important in your life, and how you would like to spend the precious time remaining.
2. **A good death** – Write down what you consider a 'good death' would look like. What does 'good' mean to you?
3. **A 'bucket list'** – Develop a list of things to do before you die, or a 'reverse bucket list' – things you never want to do again!
4. **Build a support crew** – Identify two support teams who are dedicated to getting you to the end of your journey. One will be your healthcare support team, a range of health care professionals who will deliver a range of palliative care services, and the other will be your personal support team.
5. **Write down a care wish list** – Consider the treatments you would like to continue and which you consider no longer worthwhile. These can change but give you and your team a direction. Your palliative care team can be the first port of call for any questions.
6. **Where you would like to be** – Decide where you would like to receive palliative care services: Is it your home, a hospice, or hospital?

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PCA is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life

7. **The legalities** – Research and understand the legal requirements for the state you live in. Get your affairs in order by completing an advance care plan and ensuring other planning and financial documents are up to date.
8. **Cultural and religious requirements** – Incorporate the cultural or religious requirements that you would like to observe.
9. **Communicate!** – Discuss your goals and plans with your loved ones and determine whether these are feasible in terms of support others can give. Identify whether you need to bring others on board. Palliative care professionals can care for both you and your family in times of need.
10. **Knowing what you want and how to get it will help you resolve care or treatment issues that cause you concern.**

“Facing death is never easy. We have world class health and palliative care services available in Australia, but too often it feels like you’re uncovering a jigsaw puzzle with no picture. All the pieces are there, but you can’t see how it all comes together,” said Dr Winch.

“The most powerful thing we can do is make a clear plan that simply states our wishes to enable those caring for us to follow them through when the time comes.”

During National Palliative Care Week, Palliative Care Australia encourages Australians to start thinking about how you want to face your end of life when the time comes.

1. **Create an advance care plan** by visiting www.palliativecare.org.au/advancecareplanning; and
2. **Start and conversation** with loved ones and your medical professionals about what the care you want.

– Ends –

For further information, or to request an interview, please contact:

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Interviews are available with:

- Dr Sarah Winch, Author of *Best Death Possible: A Guide to Dying in Australia*
- Dr Yvonne Luxford, Chief Executive Officer, Palliative Care Australia