

Media Release

Advance care planning should be a priority for all Australians

19 April 2018 - Palliative Care Australia (PCA) in partnership with Advance Care Planning Australia (ACPA) has released its updated [advance care planning policy statement](#) to celebrate the inaugural [National Advance Care Planning Week](#) 16-22 April.

PCA CEO Liz Callaghan says advance care planning provides a mechanism to improve the quality of care including end-of-life care for all people.

“Dying is a normal part of life so it is important for all Australians to have discussions about death and dying and they type of care they would want to receive if they could no longer speak for themselves. By having the conversation with their loved ones and health professionals, people can ensure their treatment and care best aligns with their values and preferences regarding both the type and place of care and place of death.

“Advance care planning enables the coordination of access to resources and services, to match anticipated care needs, and offers individuals the opportunity to take control of decisions which affect their care. Advance care planning should be considered as an ongoing conversation between the individual, their care team and their family, significant others and carers,” Ms Callaghan said.

ACPA Medical Director Dr Karen Detering says there is a need to focus on increasing awareness and uptake of advance care planning in the community, education and health system.

“Currently there is limited understanding of, and resources to support advance care planning implementation across sectors. Promoting awareness of and engaging in advance care planning and end-of-life care discussions is also the responsibility of individuals and the wider community, and is not just for people with a life-limiting illness, or those nearing the end of life, but should be considered by everyone,” Dr Detering said.

PCA and ACPA recommend a nationally collaborative approach to advance care planning reform, to promote and monitor advance care planning uptake within Australia. This includes:

- Consumer and community initiatives such as advance care planning advisory services, resources and awareness campaigns regarding advance care planning and end-of-life care options.
- National guidelines to promote good practice in advance care planning, which should promote whole of health system implementation.
- Investment in workforce development and training (undergraduate and post graduate) to build the capacity of all professionals to engage in end-of-life and advance care planning discussions
- Harmonisation across state and territory legislation (and terminology) governing the scope and implementation of Advance Care Directives, as well as the appointment and status of substitute decision makers.
- Development and implementation of the My Health Record as the national system for recording advance care planning conversations, Advance Care Plans and Advance Care Directives.
- National Advance Care Directive prevalence data set to monitor uptake and to assist with implementation, policy development and evaluation.

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