



Media Release

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National survey shows majority of Australians not prepared for end of life

Palliative Care Australia (PCA) CEO Liz Callaghan says a national representative survey commissioned for National Palliative Care Week (20-26 May) shows Australians are failing to prepare for the end of their lives.

“I am challenging all Australians this week to talk to their loved ones about what would matter most to them if they were to become seriously unwell to mark National Palliative Care Week,” Ms Callaghan said.

The survey of 2,100 Australians by JWS Research found that eight in ten Australians think it’s important to talk to their family about their care wishes if they were to become seriously ill, but only one in four have actually had the conversation.

“There’s a disconnect between what people think they should do to prepare for the end of life, and what actions they take. Three in four adults (74%) agree people should plan ahead for their end-of-life care, with key benefits of planning being control over their care (76%) and where they spend their final days (76%), as well as reducing the stress and burden on loved ones (76%).

“But when you look at the figures for what actions people have taken, only two thirds of Australians (67%) have some type of documentation in place, most commonly a will (48%), power of attorney (POA) and/or life insurance (24% each). Only one in ten adults (12%) have a nominated person to make healthcare decisions for them, and only one in twenty adults (5%) have an advance care plan or advance care directive (6%). One in four adults have no end-of-life documentation at all (28%).

“This survey indicates many Australians are still not comfortable talking to their loved ones and health professionals about their wishes if they were to become seriously unwell, or that the topic is not being raised with them by health professionals.

A third of Australians find it difficult to talk about their wishes for care (34%) and would only do so with family if they brought up the topic first (34%). Seven in ten Australians agree people should talk to health professionals about their wishes for end-of-life care (70%), also that health professionals should raise this issue with patients (72%).

“Interestingly, one in seven (14%) Australians have had to make healthcare decisions on behalf of a family member, who were terminally ill or required end-of-life care. A majority of this group (74%) had previously had discussions with that individual about their wishes (46%) and /or had access to documentation outlining their wishes (26%) or nominating them to make these decisions (33%). Almost all found these important in making those care decisions.

“This shows that when people do have the conversation with their loved one, it makes it easier on them when they need to make decisions about their care. So don’t put the conversation off, because talking about dying won’t kill you,” Ms Callaghan said.

PCA has resources to help you start the discussion and document your wishes that can be found at www.dyingtotalk.org.au.

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palliativecare.org.au

