

12 March 2024

Live For Today, But Plan For Tomorrow

National Advance Care Planning Week is from Monday 18 March to Sunday 24 March and Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, is encouraging everyone, no matter your age or current state of health, to discuss your future healthcare plans with your loved ones and health providers.

National Advance Care Planning Week raises awareness about the importance of advance care planning to ensure your end-of-life care wishes are known and honoured when the time comes.

Advance care planning in NSW involves completing an Advance Care Directive, which is a legal document that lets people know your healthcare and treatment wishes. According to Advance Care Planning Australia, only 25% of older Australians have a legal directive in place. Given this week is also NSW Seniors Festival, it highlights the opportunity for older people to start the conversation about their end-of-life plans.

However, Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, said that it's a misconception that only the elderly or those with health issues need to consider their end-of-life care plans.

"It's important for people of all ages to consider their plans and discuss them openly, because you just never know what might happen. Some people feel uncomfortable thinking and talking about death and dying. However, thinking about your plans, and having discussions about them, are crucial to ensure that your wishes are clear before you are in a situation, either from injury or illness, where you can no longer make decisions for yourself."

"If you are unable to make decisions about your own health, you will need someone else, like a family member or close friend, to make them for you. These types of decisions might include how and where you would like to die, or whether you're open to organ donation. It can be incredibly difficult for loved ones to make these choices in times of crisis and distress, and the decisions they make may not align with your own wishes, had they been known," said Ms Reay.

Making sure you have advance care planning conversations can alleviate stress and anxiety for both you and your family. It can also help reduce family conflict around decisions and improve the quality of care received. Lack of planning can result in unnecessary hospitalisations for those who wish to die at home, or dying in ambulances or emergency rooms, rather than in a preferred familiar environment surrounded by loved ones.

"We really encourage everyone to think about their end-of-life care wishes this National Advance Care Planning Week and to discuss them not only with your GP and other health professionals, but with your family and friends too," Ms Reay added.

Wentworth Healthcare, together with Penrith City Council, are holding a free discussion **Be in the Know for the Best Way to Go** to help start the conversation about advance care planning. Speakers will discuss the importance of documenting medical and healthcare needs, especially if someone has a life limiting illness, and a death doula will share information about the role they can play in supporting a grieving family. The event will be held on Wednesday 20 March 2024 from 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM at St Marys Community Centre. Visit nbmphn.com.au/BeInTheKnow for more information and to register.

More information about Advance Care Planning and end-of-life care can be found at nbmphn.com.au/Advance-Care-Planning