

What is an Advance Care Directive?

An Advance Care Directive is a way to record your wishes so that if you were too unwell to understand your medical treatment choices, or communicate what you want, your wishes could still be respected.

Why write an Advance Care Directive?

If you aren't able to understand or communicate your wishes and decisions about medical treatment, others will decide for you.

If you have not discussed this with your family, friends or others, and have not written down anything to guide them, they may not know what you would want them to do.

If you write an Advance Care Directive, you may save your family stress if an emergency should happen.

Who would speak for you?

In your Advance Care Directive you can name someone you would prefer to speak on your behalf if you lack capacity to express your preferences. This person is known as a 'Person Responsible'.

In Tasmania, you can also appoint an Enduring Guardian. You need to have forms from the Guardianship and Administration Board. When that form is signed and witnessed, you need to lodge it with the Board.

Who should have an Advance Care Directive?

Everyone should have one, but most especially people who

- have chronic or life-limiting health conditions,
- are entering residential care facilities,
- believe their family may have different views, beliefs or value system,
- have a condition that may lead to a loss of capacity to make decisions, (eg Alzheimer's Disease)

How does an Advance Care Directive work?

Under common law in Australia, it is expected that a doctor should comply with the wishes expressed in an Advance Care Directive, taking into account the clinical situation at the time. They would also talk to the 'Person Responsible' or 'Enduring Guardian' who can speak on your behalf about what they know of your wishes.

What about financial decisions?

An Advance Care Directive is ONLY about medical and life-style matters. Neither an Enduring Guardian, nor a 'Person Responsible' is allowed to make financial decisions.

You need to appoint an Enduring Power of Attorney to deal with finances and property in case you aren't able to manage these things for yourself at some future time.

How do I write an Advance Care Directive?

1. Think about your values, beliefs and wishes and what kinds of outcomes from medical treatment would be unacceptable for you
2. Talk to your family, friends, GP or other people you trust, and who may be asked to make decisions for you at some future time.
3. Write down your wishes using an Advance Care Directive form. (See over for where to get a form)
4. Think about who might be best to speak on your behalf, and talk to them about what you would want them to decide for you.
5. Make sure you sign, and have someone witness your Advance Care Directive
6. Give copies to family or other people who need to have one, as well as your GP and local hospital

Don't leave it too late to think and talk about your wishes for future medical and personal care

Discuss your thoughts with your family and friends, and your GP

Talk to someone who might have to make decisions for you at some future time

Write down your wishes in an Advance Care Directive

If you want further information about end of life decision-making, talk to your GP, Community Health Social Worker, or go to:

Tasmanian Palliative Care Service web page, Advance Care Planning for Healthy Dying
www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/palliativecare

Tasmanian Association for Hospice & Palliative Care Inc (TAHPC) web page
www.tas.palliativecare.org.au

The Healthy Dying Initiative is a health-promotion strategy to encourage community discussion of end of life care

It acknowledges that:

- Dying is a natural part of life
- That care should be focussed on the needs and wishes of the dying person
- That support for the family and friends of a dying person is an essential part of good care

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ADVANCE CARE DIRECTIVES

DECISION MAKING FOR THE END OF LIFE

What would happen if you became very sick or had a serious accident and couldn't talk to your doctor about your treatment?

TALK TO YOUR FAMILY, AND COMPLETE AN ADVANCE CARE DIRECTIVE SO THAT YOUR WISHES FOR CARE AT THE END OF LIFE ARE KNOWN