

Eusion

The voice of aged care

LIVING LONGER... LIVING BETTER... THE CHOICE IS INDIVIDUAL

HELPING PEOPLE MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR THEM IS IMPORTANT

"No one wants to die... death is very likely the single best invention of life. It's life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new." —Steve Jobs

Australians are living longer. Better health care, medical care, medical research and healthier lifestyles all add years to our ever extending life expectancy. According to the *Intergenerational Report 2015*, life expectancy at birth will be 95.1 years for men and 96.6 years for women by 2054/2055.

A rapidly ageing population has meant people have begun to think about where they want to be in their last years of life—and how they want to surround themselves in their death.

While most want to remain living at home, this is not always possible. The choices we make for ageing well and a good death are affected by a number of factors, some beyond our own control, such as: care needs (physical and cognitive); spiritual and cultural needs; financial capacity; and the wants and wishes of the individual.

How to engage people in a discussion about decisions to be made in relation to aged care depends on the relationship you have with them. A great starting point is to ask the person what they want and need to remain independent—assistance with care; help with shopping or banking; companionship or social support.

Advanced care discussions and planning ahead of time is imperative to ensure wants and wishes are documented and carried out if and when a life event occurs. It is important to share the document with the family so that everyone is on the same page. The aim is to obtain the best care outcome for the person needing care. The 'life plan' can be enacted if, or when, the person loses their own decisional capacity.

There are many varied and flexible options for those considering and requiring aged care services: staying at home, residential aged care, support through day care programs, respite care, moving in with loved ones and families, communal living such as retirement village, or a combination of living situations.

New developments and innovations are changing the way we are able to assist our ageing population. Existing tools, comparative platforms and concierge services to help consumers find the most appropriate aged care option for them is becoming the norm. When it comes to aged care, individuals

who have financial capacity are required to pay for some or all of their care.

Planning for death is an extension of planning for a quality life. Legal documentation should be finalised formally and well before a life event intervenes, or an individual loses the capacity to make decisions. A valid will, a Power of Attorney (for financial decisions), Enduring Guardian (for health, care and accommodation decisions) and an Advanced Health Directive (living will) should all be discussed and documented—no matter the age of the individual. A reputable estate planner or lawyer can assist with these tasks. If there are assets, and there are family members, affairs should be in order.

Sometimes conversations like these are difficult, but in the end it is about ensuring individuals feel happy, supported, nurtured and celebrated—and live their final years in a way that suits them best. As carers and loved ones, we have a responsibility to ensure that happens. So it is important to start the discussions early, be frank and honest, and make sure everything is documented formally and legally. Planning ahead is about protecting people's rights, wants and wishes. ■

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For more information visit www.drccaresolutions.com

