



Respecting Patient Choices® Advance Care Planning

# Taking Control of YOUR Health Journey





# Acknowledgements

We acknowledge All Aboriginal Nations of Victoria as the Traditional Custodians of the land. We pay respects to their Elders, Stories and Traditions.

The majority of this publication was created on Wurundjeri Land, Heidelberg Victoria.

Throughout this publication, and associated resources, the word “Aboriginal” is inclusive of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Above: Healesville

Above right: Darby River,  
Wilson's Promontory

Cover: Lone tree, Loddon Valley  
Highway near Kerang



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Loddon Valley Highway  
near Kerang

# Introduction to Advance Care Planning

If you got real crook, and you couldn't speak for yourself, would your family and doctor (or Aboriginal Health Worker) know what your wishes are about your healthcare?

There are some things available to help you plan for such times. It's called "Advance Care Planning," and the first (and most important) step is just having a Yarn about your health and ideas around healthcare. Letting everyone know *what you want* is the best way to influence the way you are cared for in times of illness.







## Why it's a Good Idea

This is not about end of life; this is about taking control of your health journey.

You have a chance to cut out all the family fights about “what he/she would want” etc.

Experience tells us that when there's an Advance Care Plan the patient and family experience is better because there is no guessing. Everyone knows exactly *what you want* and *who does what*. It may be hard for you and your family to talk about it, but you could have peace of mind about your treatment and experiences in the future.

Left and above:  
Tower Hill near Koroit



# Consider

You may have diabetes and need to be on regular dialysis from now on, which means there are many risks and possible complications. Having *your wishes* recorded will ensure things go as well as possible in the bad times.

OR

You suffer a major stroke. You end up in hospital for weeks and you can't move or speak. The doctors need to do lots of tests and procedures. *Does anyone know what you do or don't want?*







Anyone with  
(or at risk of)  
Chronic Illness  
should consider  
completing  
an Advance  
Care Plan.

Left: Old house  
near Orbost



Wilsons Promontory

# The Guessing Game

**This is the story of an Elder who may have benefited from Advance Care Planning. It is a situation that is common amongst Aboriginal communities.**

Uncle lived a good life, well into his seventies. He was a widower with two sons, four daughters, and a whole mob of nieces, nephews and grandkids. Unc always thought that when his journey came to an end, his kids would know what to do, and he never liked talking about these things because it felt like bad luck.

Uncle moved on to the Dreaming one morning and there was a family meeting that night. Everybody was asked, “do you know what he wanted?” and “did he ever say anything to you?” Just about every single person in that room gave a different response and no one could actually say for sure what Uncle really wanted. Some of the family became very frustrated and by the time decisions had been made, many arguments had occurred. Some of these people still feel disappointed by the things that happened in that meeting.

**Right or wrong, these decisions were based on guessing. If Uncle had told his family what he wanted done, people may not have argued about his wishes. Having an Advance Care Plan can reduce the stress on your family.**





Above: Whisky Beach,  
Wilsons Promontory

Right: Windmill,  
Loddon Valley near Kerang



# The Benefits of Advance Care Planning

- You continue to have a say in your healthcare, even if you become too crook to speak for yourself
- You will have peace of mind, knowing that you are more likely to receive the medical treatment you would want, and not receive the treatment you would not want
- Your family and friends are relieved of the burden of having to make decisions without knowing your choices
- Talking about these things can help to strengthen your relationships with family and friends



## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Is this the same as a will?*

No. Although Advance Care Plans are sometimes referred to as “Living Wills”, the basic difference between an Advance Plan and a Will is; an Advance Care Plan is made to assist your medical experiences. A Will is specifically about your wishes to be carried out once you have died.

### *Do I need a Lawyer?*

No. your plan can be completed independently, with family, or with someone trained in Advance Care Planning.

### *Can I change my Plan?*

Yes. You can change your plan as much as you like. If you do change your plan, it’s really important that you destroy older copies, to avoid confusion.

Aire Crossing,  
Otway National Park



***Who should I choose to make decisions for me?***

The person(s) you choose should be someone who you trust, who will listen carefully to your wishes for future care, and someone who will be comfortable making decisions in tough situations. Usually they are a family member, but it should simply be someone you trust.

***Do I need to fill out a form to say who I've chosen?***

This can be written down on any piece of paper. It is better to fill-out a legal form (Medical Enduring Power of Attorney) because then you are clearly telling your family and your doctors who to talk to.

***Who do I give my Plan to?***

Your main Healthcare providers should have a copy of your plan to add to your health record. Your family should also be

aware of your plan. If you have selected a Medical Enduring Power of Attorney they will need a copy of the document too. Your Medical Enduring Power of Attorney only becomes involved when you can't make decisions for yourself, or you are unable to communicate what you want in terms of medical treatment/s. Your Medical Enduring Power of Attorney is the first person doctors will contact if you are unable to speak for yourself.

***What is the most important step to take?***

Yarning! Talk to your family and loved-ones about what you expect. It might be a hard topic, but remember it's better to do it while you're still here to tell everyone what you want. If you choose a Medical Enduring Power of Attorney then make sure that person understands exactly what you want.

# The Steps

## **THINK**

Think about your personal wishes, and your opinions of how you want to be cared for if you get really crook. Think about how well you understand different treatments (like Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, tube feeding, breathing machines, antibiotics, blood transfusions, dialysis or cardiac massage) and ask your GP if you are unsure.

## **YARN**

Talk to your family. Make sure everyone understands what you expect. Choose someone to make decisions for you. You may want to make them your official Medical Enduring Power of Attorney.

*Your Aboriginal Health Worker or Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer may be able to assist you with the family Yarn up.*

## **ACD: ADVANCE CARE DIRECTIVE**

(Sometimes referred to as a *Statement of Choices*) This is a form that includes your specific choices about how you want to be cared for. This is the time to include any Cultural values and requests (Smoking Ceremony, Connection to Country, anything that is important to you as an Aboriginal person. Remember, the hospital may not be aware of your beliefs).

## **MEETING**

You and your chosen decision-maker should meet with someone trained in these discussions. Respecting Patient Choices® are represented in many hospitals and their clinicians can help you get all your paperwork done, as well as answer any questions you may have. Your local Aboriginal Medical

Service (AMS) or ACCHO may also have someone who can help you.

### ***SHARE***

Give a copy of your Plan to all the relevant people; your GP, your main Healthcare providers, your chosen decision-maker, and anyone else you think needs to know. Remember that you will need to replace all the copies if you change your Plan.







## Contact Info

Hospital:

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Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer/s:

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ACCHO:

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GP:

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Aboriginal Health Worker:

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Aboriginal Medical Service:

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Others:

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## Your Local Info

**Respecting Patient Choices®**

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[www.respectingpatientchoices.org.au](http://www.respectingpatientchoices.org.au)

Above: Healesville

Right: Aire Crossing,  
Otway National Park



## Other links

### **VACCHO (Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation)**

17–23 Sackville Street,  
Collingwood Vic 3066

PO Box 1328, Collingwood Vic 3066

Tel: 03 9411 9411

Fax: 03 9411 9599

Email: [enquiries@vaccho.com.au](mailto:enquiries@vaccho.com.au)

[www.vaccho.org.au](http://www.vaccho.org.au)

### **VALS (Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service)**

Tel: 03 9418 5999 or 1800 064 865

[www.vals.org.au](http://www.vals.org.au)

## Photography by James Henry

James is from a strong family line of talented artists of various fields. In 2010, backing himself, James followed his passion to become a professional photographer. He feels his work as a photographer compliments his history as a musician and event organiser.

James has an extensive knowledge of the artistic landscape throughout Victoria and indeed Australia as such he has developed a keen eye for identifying where the action takes place and the ability to offer exactly what his client seeks. This unique knowledge together with being a familiar face in the Melbourne Aboriginal community, has lead to James' high demand to shoot community events including but not limited to children, elders and festivals.

[www.jameshenryphotography.com.au](http://www.jameshenryphotography.com.au)





Bay of Martyrs,  
Great Ocean Road



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