

DOCTORS URGE QUEENSLANDERS TO TACKLE TABOO TOPIC

The Royal Commission into Aged Care has confirmed doctors' concerns that Queenslanders are being denied their dying wish because they leave it too late to put end-of-life plans in place.

The Commission's report, *Advanced Care Planning in Australia*, revealed most older Australians did not prepare for the sort of care they wanted in the event they became unable to communicate because of an accident, dementia, or illness.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said the report found only three per cent of Australians aged over 65 years had an Advance Care Directive (ACD)ⁱ.

"An ACD, sometimes called a living will, details your future healthcare choices to ensure families and doctors can carry out your dying wishes," Dr Dhupelia said.

"Not having an ACD can add a lot of extra pressure on family members trying to make decisions on behalf of a loved one during a very difficult time."

Dr Dhupelia called on the State Government to launch a public education campaign to encourage Queenslanders to tackle the taboo topic of death with their loved ones and GP.

"We are urging the State Government to support AMA Queensland's *Fifty over Fifty* campaign which aims to have 50 per cent of all Queenslanders aged over 50 establish an ACD by 2022," he said.

"The report found there was a lack of understanding about ACDs and a general reluctance amongst Australians to discuss end-of-life and death.

"We have an ageing population in Australia and need to become more comfortable with talking about death and dying.

"The first step is to have a conversation with loved ones and your GP.

"Most people needing end-of-life care services in Queensland will be treated by their GP and it's important your regular doctor knows what you want, so they can respect your wishes."

The Commission's report found ACDs could reduce unnecessary transfers from residential aged care facilities to hospital, could decrease a person's anxiety about their future and lower depressive symptoms amongst people with dementia.

Find more information about making an AHD here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tg3fYjLy-Os&index=2&list=PL3C5Ab4L_H8UNV9YOMFxFYJGh9Se1HtVVP

ⁱ <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/Documents/background-paper-5.pdf>