

Advance Care Plan

It is good to think about future health care needs and to discuss them with others. If a time comes when you are unable to make your own decisions, the law ensures that you will be represented by your closest relative, your primary carer, or someone appointed by you or a tribunal. You can help this person by telling them what would be important to you at this stage in your life. This document suggests some of the issues you might like to discuss with your representative and your treating doctor.

My name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

If I am unable to make my own decisions about my health care,

the person who is to represent me is:

Contact details for this person are:

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Signed: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____



CATHOLIC HEALTH
Australia



Australian Catholic
Bishops Conference

Guiding your representative

Illness, disease and other life events are unpredictable, and it is best to provide guidance about your future medical treatment, rather than specific directives. A trusted representative who knows you well can discuss with the doctors and nurses the options for care that are appropriate at the time. *Specific* directives ahead of time are not advisable because they may not meet your needs in the actual circumstances.

You should be aware that making decisions for someone else at the end of life can be difficult and distressing. You can make it easier for your representative if you discuss together the beliefs and values, attitudes towards treatment options, and other personal and cultural issues that are important to you. This form suggests some things that would be good to discuss and note as guidance for your representative.

In asking someone to represent you, you are asking them to take good care of you. Though it is not necessary to do everything possible to prolong life, basic nursing care is always essential. Your representative may be asked to consider the benefits of treatment options, and the harm or other difficulties they may cause, in order to judge whether an option is too burdensome for you or others.

Sometimes your representative may need to take into account non-medical circumstances, such as waiting for a relative to arrive, that might affect a decision to cease life-prolonging treatments.

If you want more help with these matters, see *A guide for people considering their future health care*, *A guide for health care professionals implementing a future health care plan*, and *Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia*. These documents can be accessed at <http://www.cha.org.au/publications>.

The law in most Australian jurisdictions requires your representative to act in your best interests. The advice you give your representative in this Advance Care Plan should be used by your representative, and by your doctors and carers, to help to determine what is in your best interests. It will be evidence of your previous values and wishes.

It is a good idea to store this Advance Care Plan with any document that appoints a person to make medical decisions for you under the laws of your state or territory (see back page). Copies of your Advance Care Plan should be given to your representative, members of your family, and your doctor.

When I am ill and unable to make my own decisions, the following would be important to me – *for example, time with my family, needs of my family, respect for my culture*

In addition to basic care, ordinarily including the provision of food and water, the following care would be important to me – *for example, effective pain relief, being kept comfortable*

Treatments I wouldn't want – *for example, distressing treatment that offers little benefit, excessive or distressing attempts to resuscitate, culturally or religiously inappropriate treatment*

Religious and spiritual care – *for example, religious rituals, care from a pastoral practitioner, chaplain, minister or elder*

Other wishes – *for example, reconciliation with friends or family, biography writing, music & art, dying at home if possible*

Appointing a representative:

If you become unable to make decisions about your own medical treatment, there are three ways in which somebody may be or become your representative:

- You have appointed the person in accordance with the laws of your state or territory (e.g. an enduring power of attorney or guardian for medical treatment).
- A court or tribunal appoints someone after you become unable to do so.
- Your spouse, carer, other next of kin or close friend, according to law, may have that authority automatically.

Sources of advice on appointing a representative are:

New South Wales

Office of the Public Guardian,
free call 1800 451 510

Western Australia

Public Advocate,
free call 1800 807 437

Victoria

Office of the Public Advocate,
free call 1300 309 337

Tasmania

Public Guardian,
ph (03) 6233 7608

Queensland

Adult Guardian,
free call 1300 653 187

Australian Capital Territory

Public Advocate,
ph (02) 6207 0707

South Australia

Office of the Public Advocate,
free call 1800 066 969

Northern Territory

Office of Adult Guardianship,
ph (08) 8922 7343

You could also seek the advice of your solicitor.