

21 March 2024

## Set up an Advance Care Plan... and make your care preferences clear! National Advance Care Planning Week (18-24 March)

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is urging rural and remote Australians to talk with their doctor about setting up an Advance Care Plan, to enable their care preferences to be understood clearly by their health professionals and loved ones should they ever become seriously ill and unable to communicate themselves.

**National Advance Care Planning Week (18-24 March)** is the ideal opportunity to take the first step towards creating an Advance Care Plan, and to talk with your family and doctor about your future treatment preferences.

“There are many days and weeks each year that put a focus on healthcare issues – and all of them are very worthy – but we really get behind National Advance Care Planning Week every year, because Advance Care Plans are just so critical in ensuring a seriously ill person’s care wishes are taken into account if, at some stage, they can’t communicate those wishes themselves” **RDAA’s immediate past President, Dr Megan Belot, said.**



“While Advance Care Plans or Advance Care Directives are most crucial for those who are ageing, or have an advanced chronic illness or life limiting illness, there are benefits for all of us in setting one up.

“While we hate to think about it, there is always the possibility of a medical emergency like a stroke or accident leaving you unable to communicate with the health professionals who are providing your care – both in the immediate aftermath of the emergency and in the longer-term.

“In this situation, an Advance Care Plan can assist your doctor and other health professionals, as well as your family, to understand your care preferences and have them formally recorded in writing.

“An Advance Care Plan is only used if a person is unable to make or communicate their decisions. It would then be used to guide the decisions made by medical staff in consultation with an appointed substitute decision-maker (if one has been nominated) and family.

“If you are older or living with an advanced chronic illness or life-limiting illness, it is much better to set up an Advance Care Plan early on rather than waiting until a time when your health is rapidly declining or you are in a healthcare crisis.

“This gives you much more control over the communication of your healthcare preferences, and enables you and your family to make decisions about your future care at a time of less pressure.

“Each state has different requirements for setting up and formalising Advance Care Plans, so it is important to talk with your doctor about the requirements for your particular state.

“Take the time during National Advance Care Planning Week to discuss your future care preferences and commit them to a written plan, so your family and healthcare professionals will be clear on the direction you want your healthcare journey to take!”

Advance Care Planning Australia ([www.advancecareplanning.org.au](http://www.advancecareplanning.org.au)) provides excellent information on Advance Care Planning (including a state-by-state guide), as well as information about options for life prolonging treatments for various conditions, and advance care planning for different health and ageing outcomes.

You can also call their National Advance Care Planning Support Service™ on 1300 208 582 or email [acpa@advancecareplanning.org.au](mailto:acpa@advancecareplanning.org.au) for further information and guidance on setting up an Advance Care Plan, and choosing or becoming a substitute decision-maker.

---

**Photos:**

[Megan Belot \(clinical photo – lower res / online use – as shown above\)](#)

[Megan Belot \(high resolution photo\)](#)

**Available for interview:**

RDAA Immediate Past President Dr Megan Belot

RDAA CEO Peta Rutherford

**Media contact:**

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890