



ST JOHN OF GOD
HEALTH CARE

Planning your future health care

**A guide
for patients in
Western Australia**





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This guide is written for adult patients of St John of God Health Care, who are considering their future health care needs.

It aims to explain the choices available to you and how you may record your treatment preferences.

Introduction

Catholic Health Care is founded on the belief that life is a gift from God. Caring for people who are sick, aged or living with a disability is based on a respect for the inherent dignity of each human being.

At St John of God Health Care, we seek to relieve suffering, disability and sickness by attending to the physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs of patients. When death is inevitable there is much that can be done in supporting a person in their transition from this life, while also caring for those who grieve for them.

Striving for health care excellence requires close collaboration between our patients, doctors, nurses, allied health and pastoral service professionals.

In order to respect your personal preferences as well as the Catholic Health Care ethos, St John of God Health Care offers only medical treatments which align with:

- your personal treatment decisions;
- Catholic Health Australia (CHA) Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia (available for you to review on request or at www.cha.org.au); and
- relevant legislation.

Respecting your preferences

The Western Australian (WA) Government recognises that adults have the right to make - and have respected - certain decisions about their future medical treatment. The *Acts Amendment (Consent to Medical Treatment) Act 2008 (WA)* and the *Guardianship and Administration Act 1990 (WA)* is a legal framework if you are considering your future health care needs and treatment preferences.

This legal framework is supported by Catholic Health Care because it promotes autonomy and dignity. It is not about euthanasia. It is about acknowledging you have the right to make medical treatment decisions as well





as appoint a substitute decision maker(s) should you lose legal capacity. The Australian Bishops and CHA “A guide for people considering their future health care” (available for you to review on request, or via www.bioethicsperth.org.au) details the Catholic Health Care ethical stance on advance care planning.

A time may come when you are unable to make decisions about your own health care, so it is a good idea to ensure that someone you trust is in a position to make decisions for you in accordance with your preferences. It is sensible to let trusted people know your values, beliefs and preferences regarding your health care. This will help guide them if they are called upon to make medical treatment decisions on your behalf.

There are a number of ways in which you may plan your future health care in the event that you are unable to make or communicate treatment decisions. Two of these are:

1. By making an Advance Health Directive (AHD) in accordance with *Acts Amendment (Consent to Medical Treatment) Act 2008* (WA). This is a legal document.
2. By appointing an Enduring Guardian in accordance with the *Guardianship and Administration Act 1990* (WA).

It is not compulsory for you to have an AHD or to appoint an Enduring Guardian. Many patients do not feel the need to do so. However, if you have recorded your preferences or intend to record your preferences, please discuss this with your doctor and be sure to review your plan regularly.

Advance Care Directives

An Advance Health Directive (AHD) is one way of recording your decisions about future treatment. It outlines your decisions about specific medical treatment in case an illness or accident leaves you unable to make or communicate decisions.

An AHD facilitates respect for your preferences and rights as a legally competent patient to refuse treatment or to request withdrawal of treatment should treatment be futile or considered by you to be overly burdensome, even if it may prolong your life.

In order to ensure you make a valid AHD it is recommended you seek medical advice. You may also want to seek legal advice. To become a legally binding document, your AHD must be signed in front of two appropriate witnesses.

It is important to note that:

- If you do have an AHD, you should discuss it with your doctor to ensure it is valid.
- Your AHD, provided it is valid, only has effect if you lose legal capacity to make or communicate decisions about your medical treatment.
- An AHD should be reviewed and updated regularly.
- You should advise St John of God Health Care at the time of hospital admission if you have an AHD.

More information about AHDs, including the official form, is available on the WA Health Department website at www.health.wa.gov.au/advancehealthdirective or by telephoning (08) 9222 4222.





Enduring Guardianship

An Enduring Guardian is a person you can appoint to make medical treatment (and some other) decisions on your behalf. However, they can only do so if you are unable to make or communicate your own decisions.

If you wish to appoint an Enduring Guardian it is important to choose someone who:

- you trust and who knows you well;
- is willing to respect your values, beliefs and preferences; and
- is able to facilitate and/or make decisions in circumstances that may be difficult or stressful.

Often a family member is a good choice, but not always. Make sure that whoever you choose will closely follow your preferences and be a good advocate for you.

It is important that you:

1. Discuss your values, beliefs and preferences with your Enduring Guardian to ensure they fully understand and respect your preferences.
2. Advise St John of God Health Care at the time of hospital admission if you have appointed an Enduring Guardian.

More information about appointing an Enduring Guardian, including the official forms, is available from the WA Office of the Public Advocate website at www.publicadvocate.wa.gov.au or by telephoning 1300 858 455 (freecall).

Summary and contact details

Planning your future health care requires good communication between you and your family, your friends, your doctor and others caring for you.

Planning should be based on careful consideration of the benefits and burdens of different treatment options, including what can reasonably be expected of your substitute decision maker(s), as well as your doctor and others caring for you.

You should:

- Take into account the ethical and legal responsibilities of your substitute decision maker(s) and doctor/health care professional, and aim to provide them with clear guidance so they can provide you with the best and most appropriate health care.
- Review your plan regularly and make any modifications according to changing circumstances.

We hope this guide has assisted you in clarifying your options when planning your future health care.

If you require further information please contact:

- WA Health Department - (08) 9222 4222 or visit www.health.wa.gov.au
- WA Office of the Public Advocate - 1300 858 455 or visit www.publicadvocate.wa.gov.au
- LJ Goody Bioethics Centre - (08) 9242 4066 or visit www.bioethicsperth.org.au





Action points

If making an Advance Health Directive (AHD), go to www.health.wa.gov.au/advancehealthdirective for further information and to download an official AHD form, or phone (08) 9222 2300.

If appointing an Enduring Guardian, identify an appropriate person/s to appoint and download an official Enduring Guardian Form from www.publicadvocate.wa.gov.au or phone 1300 858 455.

Further information on planning your future health care, including the Australian Bishops' & CHA "A guide for people considering their future health care" is available from the LJ Goody Bioethics Centre at www.bioethicsperth.org.au or phone (08) 9242 4066.

With documents, ensure you:

- Sign, date, copy, distribute and store documents carefully.
- Make those closest to you, your doctors and carers aware of the existence and whereabouts of these documents.
- Review and update documents regularly.
- Seek medical and/or legal advice if you are unsure or have any queries.
- Advise hospital staff on admission if you have an AHD or Enduring Power of Guardianship.

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St John of God Health Care Inc (Limited Liability)
ARBN 21 930 207 958 ARBN 051 960 911
Published November 2010

My notes 

With acknowledgement to:

- Victorian Version © January 2007 Austin Health
- Australian Bishops' and Catholic Health Australia - *A Guide for Health Care Professionals Implementing a Future Health Care Plan*
- *Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia*, June 2001
- Meggison, WS, *Advance Care Planning: Acts Amendment (Consent to Medical Treatment) Act 2008 (WA)*, Australian Health Law Bulletin, December 2008, 41-45
- Australian Bishops' and Catholic Health Australia - *A Guide for People Considering their Future Health Care*
- St John of God Health Care *Not for Resuscitation Policy*.

