

Articles from Prostate Heidelberg Newsletter No 155 September 2016

Putting your affairs in order

When a person gets a terminal diagnosis, the doctor in the movie says, solemnly, "Go home and put your affairs in order."

Once we realise that for most of us prostate cancer is not a death sentence, the urgency to get things in order disappears.

The other day when receiving chemotherapy treatment, I had a hypersensitive reaction. I had difficulty breathing, my face went grey and my eyes rolled back in my head. Luckily I'm still here.

A few days ago my two adult sons took me aside. They said that they knew nothing about my financial affairs. If anything happened to me, they had no idea where to get money to pay bills or to look after my wife.

Do you have your affairs in order?

What would happen if you died or were disabled tonight? Would your spouse be able to easily take care of all your affairs, starting tomorrow morning? Are all of your important papers easy to find?

It's easier to get your affairs in order when you are relatively healthy, rather than wait until a crisis occurs.

Discuss your legal arrangements with your family, and tell someone close where you keep your legal documents or how to contact your lawyer.

Organising your paperwork

It's a good idea to have all of your paperwork in one place. This will make it easier if, for example, you need to be in hospital for a long time and a family member has to help you with financial and legal matters.

Important documents to get together might include:

- birth, marriage and divorce certificates
- bank and credit card information
- investment details
- Centrelink and Medicare details
- superannuation and insurance information
- funeral information
- house title/lease documents
- will
- passport

It's important that your family are able to log onto your computer and have the passwords to all your online accounts.

Making your will

A Will is a written document that sets out what you want to happen to your property (your 'estate') after you die. It gives instructions for the person or organisation distributing your property about how this is to happen.

If you die without making a will, the state decides who gets your possessions, and they may not be shared out in the way you wish. This can cause further financial and emotional stress for family members at an already difficult time.

The law of wills has many pitfalls. It is highly advisable to consult a solicitor, the State Trustees (formerly the Public Trustee) or another trustee company about drawing up a will, particularly if complex issues are involved. Costs for preparing wills vary, so is a good idea to obtain quotes first.

The Law Institute of Victoria has a free legal referral service. Call 03 9607 9550

If you already have a will from before your cancer diagnosis, you may want to review it to make sure it reflects your current wishes.

Making enduring powers of attorney

You can appoint someone to make decisions for you if at some point in the future you're not able to make them yourself.

An enduring power of attorney is a legal document where an individual appoints another person (or people), called the 'attorney(s)', to make decisions for them about:

- financial matters
- personal matters
- both financial and personal matters or
- specific financial and/or personal matters.

The power 'endures'. This means that it continues even if and when the person loses capacity to make their own decisions about matters. The attorney's decisions have the same legal force as if the person who appointed them had made them.

The website of the Victorian Office of the Public Advocate has detailed factsheets about enduring powers of attorney and has forms that can be used to make an enduring power of attorney:

<http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/power-of-attorney/enduring-power-of-attorney>

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