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Don't be afraid to talk about end of life

Talk to your family members and make sure they know your end of life wishes. That's the message from Rick Carthew, 78.

Six months ago, Rick almost died. Suffering from pneumonia, he had lost 10 kilos and had essentially "given up". Thankfully, his eldest daughter spotted a medication he was being given that was exacerbating an existing medical condition and alerted doctors.

Support from his four children is something Rick is grateful for, but in their absence, he's thankful to have an Advance Care Plan (ACP) available for staff at VMCH Wantirna aged care, where he has lived for the past six years. If Rick becomes too unwell to communicate his wishes at end of life, they're all written down.

Sadly, Rick already knew the power of an ACP, having lost his wife of 53 years Margot, three years ago. The couple had one drawn up by their solicitor before moving into aged care.

"My eldest daughter suggested we do it and we were very keen to get the best we could for ourselves and make it much easier for our families too. We spoke to all four kids and told them exactly what we were arranging so there was no ifs or buts or anything else. For us, it (completing an ACP) wasn't tough, we just thought we may as well get it sorted out."

This week is Advance Care Planning Week, and the perfect time to talk to your loved ones about what matters most in yours, or their, lives.

"It's called peace of mind and it's one of the big blessings we can have," Rick said.

Advance Care Planning Australia has some practical 'conversation starters' around end of life care on its website. Visit: advancecareplanning.org.au/acpweek to find out more.

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About Villa Maria Catholic Homes

Through our passion and commitment to everyday people, Villa Maria Catholic Homes (VMCH) works in partnership with people of all ages and abilities. From all faiths and backgrounds, to achieve their goals, remain connected to their community and maintain independence.

We're a Catholic not-for-profit organisation, providing services to 7,600 people across Victoria. Ask anyone at VMCH and you'll find we're driven by wanting to achieve outcomes that enhance the lives of older Australians, people with disability, families and carers.

We have a long history in listening to what people want and need. By making sure we can deliver services to match those needs, we can offer greater choice and opportunity to our customers. We want to help build compassionate and sustainable communities, so everyone is included.

Today we offer services that cover affordable housing options, residential aged care, retirement living, home community and disability services and specialist education. We're an agile organisation constantly improving how we do things.