

Take time for the tough talk

TOO often I am faced with families grappling with the imminent death of a loved one and when asked about their relative's wishes, they are unable to answer. Our own death is not something most of us like to think about, let alone talk about – however it is an important conversation to have.



MEL OTTAWAY

what is best for you and an advance care directive helps to outline what you want if you are unable to tell them.

Being prepared does provide some clarity about what we might want when faced with life-or-death choices.

This year's theme for National Palliative Care week (May 22-28) is "It's your right". This is a good time to consider having a conversation with your loved ones. While for some, death can be very sudden, for others there is an opportunity to put some clear plans into place. Anyone over the age of 18 should consider having an advance directive in place.

It is a simple process and can be accessed by treating doctors via your My Health Record if ever required. It may be a difficult topic to raise but it's a vital one for us all to consider.

Mel Ottaway is Uniting Communities' executive manager, services for older people

There are no right or wrong ways to deal with death and dying. Often it is an individual's beliefs, values, experience, and circumstances which help shape their view. The most common wish is to die well and without pain or suffering.

If you are not comfortable discussing death, there are some arrangements which may help your loved ones significantly. This includes having an up-to-date will and documenting any wishes you might have about a funeral.

This information may be part of an advance care directive which outlines your preferences for your future care along with your beliefs, values, and goals.

While it is impossible to predict our future health, this does provide an opportunity to outline your wishes about how you want to live the rest of your life. In a crisis, it is often hard for loved ones to decide



Phone box connections

From previous page

There was also any number of schemes to trick the phone mechanism to get a free call.

These methods ranged from flicking the telephone cradle a specific number of times to inserting a coin attached to a thin piece of wire which, once connected, could then be retrieved.

Other plays included filing some of the edges from the coin or drilling a small hole through the coin centre.

I'm not sure that any of them really worked.

Gary Gilmour related the heart-warming story of how the public telephone kept his romance alive and led to him

marry his wife of more than 50 years: "I'd been seconded to Broken Hill with the PMG Department and my girlfriend in Port Pirie was pretty upset about it. This was back when phone calls went through the manual telephone exchange, and I got to know the chap who manned the exchange from midnight to dawn.

"I used to call my girl just after midnight from a public phone and put in enough coins for three minutes. After that, I could stay on the line for as long as I liked.

"My friend in the exchange just let us go and sometimes we'd talk for hours. I'm not sure what would have

happened had he been caught but I'm sure it saved the relationship. We even invited him to our wedding."

Over the years, public telephone boxes changed shape and colour. Gone was the red colour and the Tardis design, replaced with more modern aluminium and a more open style.

Further improvements followed, including introduction of phonecards in the early '80s, which alleviated the inconvenience of continually feeding in coins.

Public phone boxes have become something of an oddity nowadays, a throwback to another time and a different

technological age. Whenever I see someone using one, I find myself wondering why.

Telstra has committed, with the federal government, to maintaining the public phone network around Australia for the next 15 years.

So, for the foreseeable future at least, these relics of a bygone age will remain in place, just to remind us of how things used to be.

Bob's latest book "Adelaide Remember When: The Boomer Stories" is now available at all good book shops. He posts memories of Adelaide every day on Facebook.com/adalaiderecoverwhen/



Being prepared helps provide some clarity about what people might want when faced with life-or-death choices.

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