208. Name withheld

Hi Tina,

Thank you for your advice earlier this week.  Following that discussion, may I note:

* My mother-in-law (who died aged 93 years) did give personal and medical powers of attorney to her daughters quite willingly when in her early 80s.  She saw this as a sensible precaution, as having those in place for her (second) husband had enabled his children to manage for him when dementia overtook him.

There was no need for her daughters to exercise those powers and my mother-in-law continued to pay her own bills and run her own affairs until she died.  (I should note reluctantly, as she wished to delegate all that, but her daughters kept her doing so as it helped keep her engaged and mentally stimulated).

* When in his late seventies, my father very reluctantly agreed to detail his plans for his funeral when we suggested it as we did not know what he wanted.  As part of that thinking through, he and my mother both then completed and signed personal and medical powers of attorney, with their four children jointly involved.  Before coming to that decision, there were some emotional discussions about this, as my father saw talking of his funeral as “hurrying him into his grave” and refused for some time to see that it would help us to do as he wanted, when eventually there was a need.

The difference in approaches between these older people was marked (though the discussions all happened at around the same time).  Our experience suggests that there may an easier way that is less threatening to some older people and to their perceptions of self-capacity.

This approach would be that when people reach the age of 65 years (or the age at which the aged pension can start), every-one is invited to set up powers of personal and medical attorney, and to detail their funeral preferences.  They could lodge those as now with lawyers, family or friends or others.

This would be just a Commonwealth Government standard practice related to people mobbing into a new age cohort.  Everyone is invited to set up the powers of attorney and detail their funeral preferences by the relevant Commonwealth Government department.  That department would send out pro forma documents with details of the benefits and requirements (in much the same way you can now buy will kits from post offices).

The pro forma documents would help the older person to complete or include all the necessary details, should they choose to do so, as the completion of the powers of attorney and the funeral plans process would be voluntary.

If the older person chooses to register those details with that department as well, it could help completing the register of people with powers of attorney.

This standard related-to-age process depersonalises discussion with family or advisors, as everyone is offered the option and many are likely adopt it, and it could enable the register discussed to be completed more easily.

While it is suggested that this practice be initiated by the Commonwealth Government, it is also suggested that participation at all stages would be voluntary and optional.

Thoughts for your consideration.

With best wishes,