



NEWS RELEASE

15 April 2015

Have a conversation that counts... before it's too late

Well-known TV household personality, Tammy Wells, is encouraging New Zealanders to start thinking, talking and planning for their future and end-of-life care before it is too late.

Known as the 'Briscoes lady' who has appeared on our screens for almost three decades, Tammy is sharing her story following her own experiences of losing her mother, Bonnie, to a short illness in 2013.

Tammy describes how she wishes she had spoken to her mother to help her live her final days in the way that she would have wanted.

"I had some conversations with mother," explains Tammy, "but had we talked about it more then perhaps we could have put plans in place that may have fulfilled more of her wishes. I just thought afterwards I can't have these conversations anymore, mother is gone."

Advance Care Planning is a national initiative that encourages people to think, talk and plan for their future and end-of-life care. It is led by a cooperative of hundreds of people across New Zealand's health and social care system.

Thursday 16 April marks Conversations that Count Day and this year's theme is to 'Start a Conversation'. The national ACP Cooperative has teamed up with organisations across the country to co-ordinate *Morning Tea with ACP* events and activities on Thursday to raise the awareness and importance of starting the conversation.

"Conversations that Count are highly important because you are giving a gift to your family, empowering them with the things that you hold dear and how you want things to go for you so that they know through this time of high emotion they have some great direction," adds Tammy.

Dr Barry Snow, clinical lead of the National Advance Care Planning Cooperative explains that families have a high chance of not knowing family members' views without discussion.

"Most people, around 85%, will die after a chronic illness rather than a sudden event, and up to a half of us will not be in a position to make our own decisions when we are near

death. We all potentially have lots of time to think, talk and plan for our future and end of life care. Yet for most families this conversation does not happen, or if it does, then only when someone is very unwell.

“It’s important to think about how you would want to be looked after under circumstances that may not be dignified, may cause suffering or are not what you would want.”

Advance Care Planning is voluntary and anyone can participate. Some people like to plan for the unexpected, some people only want to plan once they are approaching the end of their lives, and some choose not to plan at all.

“I understand it can be difficult to talk about death and dying, but try and think about what matters to you or give a gift to your loved ones – the gift of knowing what you want. Take the opportunity to share your thoughts and ideas with your family and whānau. Sharing your Advance Care Plan will ensure that the best possible care is provided in the way that you wanted,” adds Dr Snow.

Tammy’s story will be available to view on [the Conversations That Counts website](#) on Conversations That Count Day. Visit the site to find out more or email one of our postcards to someone you care about to help get the ball rolling.

Further information and resources to help start a conversation with your friends, whānau and family can also be found at [the Advance Care Planning website](#).

Notes to editors

Tammy Wells and Dr Barry Snow are available for interview – please contact the Auckland DHB medialine on 09 375 3499.