



When independence begins to change: Planning before decisions become urgent – Part 2/3

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For years, retirement may unfold exactly as imagined.

Travel. Time with grandchildren. Long lunches with friends. Gardening, golf, volunteering or simply enjoying the freedom of having fewer deadlines.

Then something changes.

Perhaps one partner begins finding household tasks more difficult. A fall leads to a hospital visit. Driving becomes less comfortable. Memory concerns appear. Or the family simply notices that Mum or Dad is not managing quite as easily as they once did.

This stage of life does not automatically mean moving into aged care.

But it can be the moment when careful planning becomes particularly valuable.

The estate planning documents organised years earlier may now take on practical importance. The family may need to understand who can assist with decisions. Financial arrangements may need reviewing. Support at home may need to be considered.

Above all, conversations should ideally happen before a crisis forces everyone to make decisions quickly.

Keeping the individual at the centre

Families naturally want to protect the people they love. But ageing parents also want to retain independence, dignity and control over their lives.

Good planning brings those two priorities together.

Rather than beginning with, "What should we do with Mum or Dad?", a better starting point may be, "What does Mum or Dad want the next few years to look like?"

Perhaps remaining at home is the priority.

Perhaps downsizing closer to family feels right.

Perhaps home support could make everyday life easier.

Or perhaps a retirement community or future aged care option should be explored before it becomes necessary.

These decisions can benefit from several forms of advice.

A Financial Adviser can help assess whether income, investments, superannuation and other assets can support changing living arrangements.

A solicitor can review legal arrangements and decision-making authorities.

An accountant may help where property sales, investments, family businesses or tax implications need consideration.

An aged care professional can help the family understand care options, services and the practical pathway through the aged care system.

Most importantly, family members can help communicate what matters personally.

Avoiding decisions made in crisis

One of the greatest advantages of planning early is having choices.

When families wait until a hospital discharge, serious fall or sudden decline in health, decisions may need to be made within days.

That can be stressful for everyone.

By considering possible future scenarios earlier, families can research options, discuss preferences and understand the financial implications without the pressure of an immediate deadline.

Top 3 transition-planning tips

- 1. Ask about wishes, not just needs.**

Understand how the person wants to live, where they want to live and what independence means to them.

- 2. Review finances and legal arrangements together.**

Changing care requirements can affect cash flow, investments, property decisions and legal responsibilities. Coordinated advice can help.

- 3. Involve family early.**

Regular family conversations can help reduce misunderstandings and make future decisions feel shared rather than imposed.

Ageing does not mean losing control.

In many ways, planning early is about protecting control for as long as possible.

Eventually, however, some families reach the point where greater care is needed.

And when that moment arrives, the quality of the conversations and planning that came beforehand can make an enormous difference.

That brings us to the final stage of the journey: navigating aged care with confidence, compassion and the right advice beside you.

If this article has inspired you to think about your unique situation and, more importantly, what you and your family are going through right now, please get in touch with your advice professional.

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