COMMUNITY URGED TO PUT THEIR PLANS IN BLACK AND WHITE

Attorney General Greg Smith SC and Minister for Ageing and Disability Services John Ajaka today launched a new advertising campaign urging people to pre-plan for incapacity later in life.

“Only five per cent of adults clearly understand the three essential documents – Wills, Powers of Attorney and Enduring Guardianship - that are available to plan ahead in case they can no longer manage their financial affairs or make decisions about their health and lifestyle,” Mr Smith said.

“The new NSW Government advertising campaign “Get it in black and white” is designed to get people to become informed, take control and plan ahead for themselves and their ageing parents,” he said.

Mr Ajaka said people now lived longer, and illnesses like Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and strokes were on the rise.

“Research shows Australians are not prepared for the possibility that something adverse could happen to themselves or their loved ones.”

“We like to believe things only happen to other people and that somehow we’re invincible, but the truth is we are not and we should all prepare for the future.”

“Planning for later life is like having an insurance policy in place – except it covers your health and financial requirements, and ensures your loved ones are looked after when you are no longer around.”

While the majority (85 per cent) of adults with ageing parents expect to be involved in some aspect of decision making for their parents: 71 per cent have not discussed with their parents how their finances would be managed; 64 per cent have not spoken about what medical or health treatment they would (or would not) want; and 58 per cent have not spoken about how their parents wish their estate to be distributed after they die.1

“Get it in black & white” is an Australian-first, NSW Government advertising campaign in print, on television, online and on social media. It encourages people to seek information, have these conversations now, and take control of their own plans for later life while they have the capacity to do so.

1Lonergan Research, Planning for Later Life Report - study conducted among 1,016 Australians aged 18 years or older, September 2013.
Mr Smith said: “You need to have legal capacity when you prepare legal documents, such as a Power of Attorney, Enduring Guardian or a Will. Once there is a diagnosis of dementia or similar illness, you have left it too late,” Mr Smith said.

“When someone suffers a sudden illness of loses mental capacity it is often left to our courts and tribunal to decide who will make decisions about their life. It is much better to put plans in place early,” Mr Smith said.

Tracey Spicer, journalist and spokesperson for “Get it in black & white”, has seen first-hand the importance of planning ahead and understanding the wishes of ageing parents.

“Most of us looking after older parents also have to cope with looking after our own kids at the same time, and we too should make sure we have at least some of these documents in place – like an up-to-date and professionally drafted Will that includes a provision for guardianship of your children under the age of 18 years, in case anything happens to you.”

The Planning Ahead Tools website has relevant information, including a section for health professionals and legal professionals. Fact sheets are available for download in 13 languages.

For more information visit www.planningaheadtools.com.au