

Now in its 5th edition, 'When I Die' was created in 2016 by its Hastings-based author Kathryn Perks. The workbook provides a place to record end of life wishes and personal information that may not be included in a will, but needed to help with the administration of an estate.

How did 'When I Die' come about?

The idea for 'When I Die' came to me back in 2009 when my mother died. Originally from Christchurch, I was living in Australia, but returned to New Zealand for the funeral and to help my brother and sisters with the clearance of mum's possessions and house sale. While processing our grief, and when administrative concerns were the last thing we wanted to focus on, I began to think about my own accumulation of 'stuff' in both Australia and New Zealand and how ill-prepared I was if anything should happen to me, where my family would be scrambling to find my information in two countries. It would have been so helpful to have a reference with all mum's wishes and personal information in one place which the family could access immediately, to give us more certainty that the choices we were making were what she would have wanted, especially regarding her body disposal preference and the format of her funeral. We anguished over why we had not discussed with her all that was suddenly unknown.

Mum had been a very organised person, had put together everything she thought we'd need and told us where all her important documents were, but it was a challenging, lengthy and often overwhelming task trying to find the necessary information, a lot of which was no longer relevant. As none of the family lived in Christchurch there was also an urgency in getting things sorted quickly. We spent long days diligently sorting, clearing, donating and selling her possessions so that within three weeks the job was done and the house sold.

Returning to Australia, the idea stayed with me until I returned to live in New Zealand in 2013 when I started to research the concept of creating a readily accessible point of reference, in a workbook format, that would best meet most people's needs. I looked at what was currently available both in New Zealand and overseas and shared the idea with friends who were all very encouraging, saying they wished there had been something similar available to them when they'd been faced with this responsibility.

Considering what my own family would need to know about me, I spent the next few years drafting the first edition of what I chose to simply title 'When I Die', which ultimately went to print in 2016.

What's included in the workbook?

'When I Die' has evolved over the years, following suggestions and ideas for more inclusions, edits and re-formatting, leading to the most recent 5th edition, printed in 2021. Contents currently include space to record personal family details needed for death certificate, whether there is a will, preference for body disposal, contact information of Executor, Lawyer and other professionals as well as who to notify, with their contact details, preference for funeral or memorial service format including 'My Life Story' pages to share life experiences, personal identification details, service providers, bank and financial details, income and investments, business and property ownership, regular payments and debts, memberships and subscriptions, insurances, distribution of personal items not listed in Will, computer/technology access including email accounts, social media and online registrations and memberships, borrowed or loaned items as well as spare pages for amendments and additions.

'When I Die', by Kathryn Perks