

WHEN 'BLOOD AND MONEY' COLLIDE

2022 FINALIST

For Craig Phillips, being a finalist in the 2022 Aged Care Adviser of the Year and Aged Care Advice Program of the Year awards is validation of the commitment Phillips Wealth Partners has in delivering quality aged care advice.

Jayson Forrest reports.



**CRAIG PHILLIPS
2022 FINALIST
ACS AGED CARE ADVISER
OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Looking back well over a decade ago, Craig Phillips credits two catalysts behind his move into aged care advice. The first was when his father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, where Craig saw firsthand how difficult it was to navigate the complexity of aged care rules and deal with government agencies.

The second catalyst was when he was working as a senior planner for a large financial planning practice in 2011, where he looked after an older cohort of clients. Craig noticed how some of these clients started to present at meetings with memory loss issues and clearly needed extra supportive care.

“Having absolutely no idea at the time about what aged care was, both of these issues motivated me to learn more about it. From my personal perspective when caring for dad, I wanted to understand aged care better, and from a professional perspective, I needed a greater understanding of the technical issues surrounding aged care for my advice clients.”



Today, Craig – as the Principal and Senior Financial Planner at Phillips Wealth Partners – has a much deeper understanding of aged care. For him, it’s about helping families understand the high costs and complexity of permanent residential aged care, whilst assisting them navigate the rules surrounding aged care and Centrelink. Importantly, it’s showing clients the implications their decisions have on loved ones entering care in a timely and empathetic way.



“We often just think about aged care as being either home or residential care for a loved one, but it’s a lot more than that,” says Craig. “Aged care advice is also about finding the optimum way to pay for the care. As advisers, our objective is to help clients generate enough cashflow to fund aged care and then to preserve their estate.”

He adds: “We know that entering aged care can be stressful. Therefore, the earlier a person can get good advice will help minimise mistakes and provide relief to families, knowing their loved one is getting sound advice from an accredited professional.”



A VALUABLE OFFERING

For clients seeking aged care advice from Phillips Wealth Partners, the business provides an initial complimentary 15-30 minute phone meeting. This initial discussion helps the business to determine the client's immediate situation, including the urgency of their aged care needs, the priority of actions required, as well as to provide reassurance to the client that they're not on their own.

From this initial meeting, there is a 90-minute discovery meeting with the client, which usually involves two aged care specialists – both Craig and another Aged Care Specialist, Luisa Capezio – to better understand the client's priorities, their financial position, and to determine the next steps for the client, which includes the type of care and the costs involved.

“Once we have triaged the aged care needs of the client, we provide them with a detailed ‘terms of engagement’ letter with a summary of the meeting. In this letter, we are very clear on the advice outcomes that the client specifically wants to see in their aged care plan, which might be keeping the family home and paying a part refundable accommodation deposit (RAD) or selling the home and paying the full RAD.”

Usually, the advice is delivered to the client within two weeks, although depending on the urgency of the client's situation, Craig says the advice can be delivered earlier than that.

Awards validate specialist work

It's fitting that Craig's commitment to aged care advice has been recognised. He was named a finalist in both the 2022 Aged Care Adviser of the Year and 2022 Aged Care Advice Program of the Year awards. In congratulating Craig, Assyat David – Director of Aged Care Steps – says the awards are aimed at raising awareness of the highly valued and expert services that aged care advisers provide.

“Aged care advice plays a critical role in ensuring that clients have more choices and greater control as they plan for all phases of their retirement. We believed it was time to recognise the great work advisers achieve in this increasingly important area of advice by launching the inaugural Aged Care Adviser of the Year awards,” says Assyat. “We congratulate Craig on his achievements and for being named a finalist in these prestigious awards.”

The recognition is not lost on Craig, who is justifiably proud of the hard work that has gone into Phillips Wealth Partners since its creation in 2018.

“For both Luisa and myself, being a finalist in these awards is great validation of the work we're doing for our clients,” says Craig. “The awards also recognise the great work being done by other advisers in aged care advice, which helps motivate us to become an even better business for our clients and the wider community.”



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Craig Phillips



BE PREPARED FOR COMPLEXITY

“But why should clients seek advice on aged care? Is it really that hard?”

They’re great questions, which I’m often asked,” says Craig. “People need to understand that aged care can be incredibly complicated. It’s an area where it’s very easy to make a mistake that could cost potentially many thousands of dollars, while creating further stress for families and their loved one.

“Aged care has unique rules, with implications across multiple areas including: cashflow and budgeting, asset protection, social security, tax, and estate planning. All these various elements need to be considered when developing and implementing an effective aged care strategy.”

Importantly, Craig says aged care advice provides clients with peace of mind during a particularly stressful and emotional time.

Expert tips

For clients considering aged care, Craig provides the following tips:

1 Get advice before you move a loved one into aged care and not after. While not impossible, it is often difficult to restructure and move assets once a strategy has been implemented without advice.

2 Be financially well organised. When preparing a parent for aged care, you will need to complete various Centrelink forms, which means having access to their finances, such as bank accounts, superannuation, shares, and other assets, like real estate. In addition, be aware of any prior gifting arrangements, as well as legal documents, like wills and Powers of Attorney.

For those clients who do take up the aged care advice offering at Phillips Wealth Partners, Craig says they value the time his team has taken to understand not just their financial position, but what's really important to the person needing residential aged care.

“There are 27 residential aged care facilities in Canberra and you can’t just pluck one out of the air for clients. We do the due diligence and ensure that the shortlist of facilities we provide clients with are the most suited for the needs of their loved one,” he says.

Craig says clients recognise that the advice Phillips Wealth Partners provides them is highly personalised. There is also a plan peer review system in place within the business for all of its advice, which ensures it is technically accurate.

“Clients value the fact that not only do we understand the complex rules around aged care, but we can also translate them in a way they can understand,” says Craig. “We provide a roadmap for care, where all the decision makers – if possible – are involved in the process from the get-go. That’s because family dynamics can sometimes fall apart when ‘blood and money’ collide.

“At the end of the day, aged care is expensive, so we have to ensure clients can afford it and that we’re able to preserve as much of their estate as possible. I believe that at Phillips Wealth Partners, we’re helping our clients navigate the complexity of aged care, whilst providing them with peace of mind and the right solution for their loved ones.”

ABOUT THE AGED CARE ADVISER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The 2022 Aged Care Adviser of the Year award celebrates the outstanding achievements of financial advisers providing aged care advice. This award recognises Craig Phillips as demonstrating advice excellence and professional commitment to the provision of aged care advice to older Australians and their families.

The Aged Care Adviser of the Year award is sponsored by Aged Care Steps – a market leader in the provision of aged care resources and tools for financial advisers.

