



The Financial Decisions Doctors Delay - And Why It Matters for Wellbeing

By Carey Church, with insights from Peter Church and Paul Swarbrick - Moneyworks NZ



Introduction

Doctors carry a workload unlike almost any other profession: clinical intensity, high stakes, fast decision-making, and very little slack in the system. Against that backdrop, long-term personal decisions - especially financial and life-design decisions - often get pushed aside.

After nearly three decades advising New Zealand doctors, I've noticed the same three delayed decisions come up again and again for clinicians aged 40–70. And none of them are strictly "financial". They are about clarity, control, and wellbeing.

My colleagues Peter Church and Paul Swarbrick see these patterns consistently in their work with senior medical professionals across the country.

1. The Decision to Slow Down

This is the decision many doctors delay the longest. Two things tend to be underestimated at the same time:

- how fatigued they actually are, and
- how financially feasible it may be to adjust workload or pace.

Often the delay has little to do with money. It's about identity, commitment to patients, and the habit of working at full capacity.

Many doctors tell us they plan to "keep going until 70", yet the reality of sustaining the current pace may be far more challenging than expected.

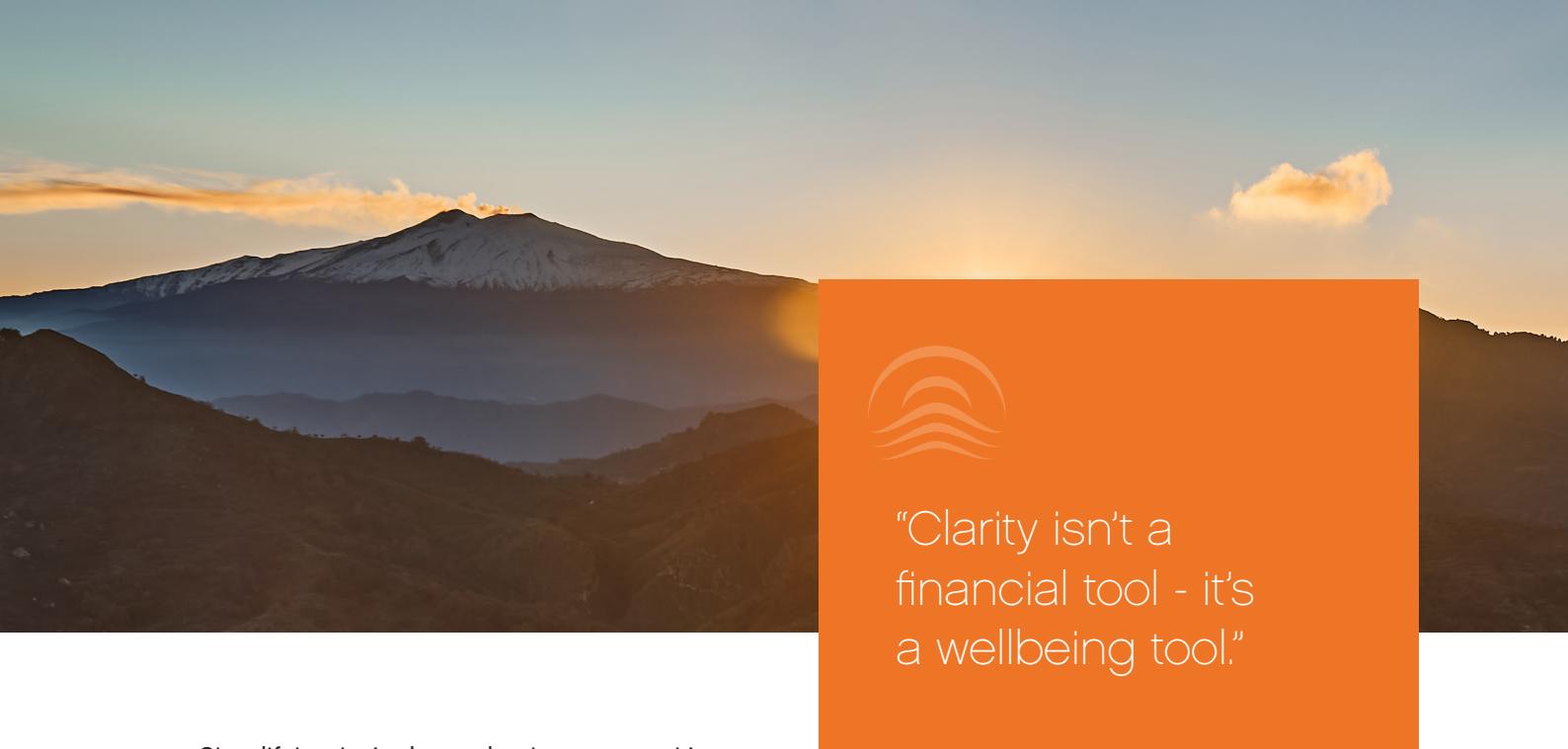
Clarity helps enormously. When someone knows what their real options are, rather than assumptions or worst-case scenarios, decisions become grounded and far less stressful.

2. The Decision to Simplify

Most doctors accumulate complexity organically over decades: multiple accounts, legacy superannuation, KiwiSaver, trusts, old insurance policies, property, historical investments, and often a partner's financial world layered in as well.

Nothing is necessarily "wrong" - but the cognitive load grows quietly.

Peter often describes it as "too many tabs open". The system works, but it isn't peaceful.



“Clarity isn’t a financial tool - it’s a wellbeing tool.”

Simplifying isn’t about chasing returns; it’s about reducing background noise. When doctors streamline their financial structure, the most common words we hear are “lighter”, “clearer”, and “I can finally see the whole picture”.

3. The Decision to Design the Next Stage of Life

This is usually the deepest delay. Not because it’s unimportant, but because it’s hard. Most doctors have spent decades inside systems that reward intensity, focus and constant responsibility.

When they reach a point where life can be more flexible, the questions become larger:

- What do I want the next decade to look like?
- How much work feels right - emotionally and physically?
- What will give me meaning outside clinic or theatre?
- How do I transition out without feeling like I’m stepping away from purpose?

We see this regularly: once someone understands their financial foundation clearly, the life questions become easier. Options feel real. Decisions feel less like a leap and more like a progression.

Bringing It All Together

Slowing down, simplifying, and designing the next stage of life are decisions many doctors delay.

Not because they don’t matter, but because the day-to-day demands of medicine leave little space to reflect.

Working through them doesn’t force early retirement or major change. It simply replaces uncertainty with clarity - and clarity is a wellbeing tool.

A Quiet Note About Our Webinars

Several of these themes are explored further in our short online sessions for senior doctors. 10–30 minute webinars focused on clarity, life design, and managing complexity.

Details are at: moneyworks.co.nz/doctors

If this article has raised questions about your own situation, you’re welcome to book a private 30-minute clarity conversation with me, Peter, or Paul. No obligation, just a confidential space to think things through.