

Planning the service

Whilst funerals are usually sad occasions, meaningful funerals can assist people to cope with their loss. Such funerals can be sources of strength, hope and peace.

A funeral service can be religious or secular, and can take place in one of several venues. It can take place in a church or other place of religious worship, in the funeral home chapel, at the graveside or crematorium, or even outdoors if permitted by regulations.

Funeral directors have the facilities and expertise to offer you a full range of options. They will discuss your preferences and assist you to plan an appropriate funeral service.

Decisions will need to be made regarding matters such as:

- When and where you would like the funeral to be held
- The type of service you desire
- Details about the viewing of the deceased
- If burial or cremation will follow the service (for many people this decision may reflect religious or ethnic attitudes and family traditions)
- Which coffin or casket and clothing you want for the deceased
- Who you would like to be involved
- What floral arrangements and motor vehicles would be appropriate and any other relevant matters.

Estimating your costs

Funeral costs can vary a great deal therefore, it is important to obtain a written estimate, and if needs be, and time allows, to compare prices with other firms. Be informed of the cost implications of the funeral choices you are making. Methods of payment vary from one funeral director to another, and often a deposit will be required

Members of the AFDA will assist families to understand the cost structure of particular funerals, and they welcome the opportunity to answer your questions. This helps prevent problems and misunderstandings from arising further down the track.

After the service - practical matters

There are many things that need to be attended to after the flood of activity associated with a funeral. Various people and organisations should be notified of the death and somebody will have to sort through the deceased's documents. Some important documents to look for include will, birth and marriage certificates, insurance policies and bank account details.

Australian Funeral Directors Association

When faced with having to make funeral arrangements, most people have no prior experience in organising such an event, and little knowledge of what to do.

Funeral directors can alleviate this burden for you by providing a range of services, allowing you to choose an appropriate funeral that will be conducted professionally, and with dignity.

For your own peace of mind, select a funeral director who is an accredited member of the Australian Funeral Directors Association which requires its members to honour a strict code of ethics and code of conduct.

For more information or to find an Accredited Member of the AFDA, our website www.afda.org.au provides contact details for all Accredited Members or alternatively call 1300 888 188 for assistance in locating an accredited AFDA Member in your area.



What do I do when someone dies?

A practical guide to the funeral process and procedures



www.afda.org.au

Death and funerals are usually unwelcome and disturbing events, and many people are unclear about what is involved. It is a time when families can be overwhelmed by practical, legal and financial decisions arising out of their loss.

What do I do when someone dies?

When someone close to you dies the initial shock can be overwhelming. Even if the death was anticipated, it can still be difficult to believe that it has actually happened. Do not be afraid to ask friends, family or neighbours for support as there are many decisions to be made, and things that need to be done in the first few hours after a death.

Who do I contact?

Whether a death occurs at home, in hospital or in a public place, the first person who should be contacted is generally a doctor. In the event of a medical practitioner being unable to sign a death certificate, this matter is usually deferred to the coroner. Such a case is called 'A Reportable Death'. A death certificate, signed by a doctor or coroner, is the official registration of death and must be lodged with the relevant State or Territory Government office.

The next person to contact, besides family members and friends, is the funeral director of your choice who will arrange the transfer of the body and can begin making the desired funeral arrangements. Funeral directors are there to help and can assist you at any hour of the day or night, seven days a week.

Your funeral director will be able to explain the process of 'A Reportable Death' and will also organise to lodge the death certificate for you and obtain a copy for the next of kin.

Choosing a funeral director

Unless the deceased had communicated their choice of funeral director before their death, the executor or person arranging the funeral will need to make the selection.

The decision as to who you call may depend on a number of factors including the funeral director's experience, reputation or location. Choosing a member of the Australian Funeral Directors Association you can be assured of professional, understanding and caring service throughout your time of need.

What a funeral director can do for you

The role of a funeral director is to provide a very special service. He or she must be able to advise on and arrange all the details that make up a funeral service.

From the moment a family calls, the funeral director will make every possible effort to meet the family's wishes. Above all, the funeral director must be understanding, compassionate, and act in a way which is ethical and deserving of trust.

The responsibilities of a funeral director include:

- Arrange all matters requested by the family taking into consideration the legal, social, cultural, and religious considerations relating to the deceased and to the mourners
- Transportation of the deceased from the place of death to the mortuary
- Preparation of the deceased
- Collation of certificates from hospital or doctor's surgery

- Completion of statutory requirements, including forms
- Preparation and insertion of newspaper notices
- Contact with clergy or funeral celebrant
- Organise bookings at the venue, church, cemetery and/or crematorium
- Officially register the death
- Obtain copies of the death certificate
- Organise all details of the funeral service, including the supply of vehicles and pall bearers
- Advise on religious and ceremonial requirements in relation to the funeral service and to visitation and other customs prior to, during and after the funeral.

Why have a funeral?

A funeral is for those who are living. It is a celebration of the life of the loved one who has died.

Everyone who has been touched by the life of the deceased needs the opportunity to share in that celebration.

Funerals also recognise the life of the deceased person, can strengthen family ties and responsibilities, reinforce beliefs about life and death, and facilitate the expression of emotion.

Meeting with your funeral director

If this is the first time that you are arranging a funeral, the task can be quite daunting. At this time the experience, care and professionalism of your AFDA Member will be most important. The funeral director is there to guide and advise you on the many matters which need to be considered and to be entrusted with all the arrangements as directed by you.

Initial interviews with the funeral director can be at their offices or in your home, whichever you prefer. At these interviews they will generally ask what type of funeral arrangements you desire.

You may need basic information about the deceased including full name, address, gender, occupation, place and date of death. Access to a Birth Certificate or Passport, and Marriage Certificate may be useful.

All reputable funeral directors can provide a wide range of services to suit your precise needs. They will discuss your preferences and requirements, and are fully flexible when it comes to assisting you with the planning of appropriate funeral and burial or cremation arrangements. They can help you make the funeral as simple or elaborate as you want, and the cost will be reflected accordingly.