

The first week:  
Notifications &  
funeral arrangements

Booklet 2

Help in coping:

When someone dies in a road accident

Kristine Alilunas Rodgers

Kristine Alilunas Rodgers 1999, 2000

Australian Capital Territory Magistrates Court, Canberra, Australia

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In memory of Colin Rodgers. To all those who have died on Canberra's roads. For all those bereaved by a road accident in Canberra, and for those helping them.

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**DISCLAIMER** This booklet deals with a range of sensitive and highly personal subjects, namely the funeral, burial and cremation. It tries to do this in a way that acknowledges and affirms the wide variety of religious, spiritual and cultural beliefs and practices within the Canberra community.

Some people may not have a particular religious affiliation or community. In this case, you may have few models or guidelines to follow, and more individual decisions to make in this time of crisis. This booklet aims to provide you with information about options that may help you to hold a funeral and say goodbye to the person who died in ways that are right for you – but without wishing to impose any 'right' way.

The booklet is designed as a guide, not as legal advice. Every endeavour has been made to ensure the accuracy of the contents of this booklet at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that policies and procedures referred to in this booklet, and relevant laws, may change after publication.

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

The *Glossary* at the end of the booklet provides definitions of terms you may not know.

### Other booklets

For procedures that take place soon after the person's death, > see *Booklet 1*.

For compulsory third party insurance, workers' compensation, motor vehicle insurance and other legal and financial matters, > see *Booklet 3*.

For funeral directors, the crematorium, Canberra and Queanbeyan cemeteries (contact information, overview of services/prices/site options/restrictions), > see *Booklet 7*.

Seek further information and assistance from the contacts listed in *Booklet 8*.

# 1 CHECKLIST: NOTIFICATIONS & OTHER THINGS TO DO VERY SOON

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## Where relevant to your circumstances, notify:

### **family and friends**

- \* Think about ensuring that everyone who mattered to the person who died is notified. Ask a relative or friend to draw up a list and set up a 'chain' of notifications. You can also ask the police to help notify close family members or friends.
- \* Arrange **death notice** (with help of funeral director).
- \* Ask friends or family members to assist you with phone inquiries and paperwork, or to accompany you to agencies.

### **minister of religion/funeral celebrant**

### **employer(s)** (of the person who died, of other family members). Ask for **leave** from work and ask what **assistance** may be available (employee assistance program? financial or practical help? counselling?). Or notify **Centrelink** if you are already receiving a pension or benefit (and ask to speak to a social worker).

### **child(ren)'s school or college**

### **unions, clubs, ex-service, other similar organisations**

### **bank** (or building society/credit union) – to put a stop on cheques or credit cards in the deceased's name.

### **Seek legal assistance** (will or intestacy, insurance, coronial procedures, personal injury compensation, criminal charges).

### **Consult a doctor as soon as possible**, especially if you were injured in the accident or feel you may suffer from nervous shock or post traumatic stress; legal difficulties may arise later, if delayed.

### Start now to **document** your experiences, contacts, expenses, loss of wages, etc., particularly if there is any likelihood of claiming compensation.

### **If a driver may have been at fault:** contact the **compulsory third party insurer** (or relevant government body if a government vehicle may have been at fault). **Time limits apply.**

### **If your vehicle was involved in the accident:** report the accident to your **motor vehicle insurance company**. **Time limits may apply.** Some insurers or motoring clubs offer various forms of **immediate assistance**.

## **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF & GETTING ASSISTANCE**

- Take care if operating machinery or equipment. It is wise to avoid driving.
- Make an appointment with a doctor if you were in the accident and had any injuries (even minor) or if you are not coping.
- If you or other family members need help in coping, contact the Coroner's Officer or the Coronial Support Service (> see *Booklet 8*).

## 2 KEY POINTS BEFORE THE FUNERAL

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### 1 CHECKLIST: KEY POINTS BEFORE ARRANGING THE FUNERAL

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- Allow ample time in setting a date for the funeral** – the release of the person's body by the coroner may take time.
  - Allow time for viewing** after the release of the person's body and before the funeral.
  - Search for a will or instructions about funeral arrangements.**
  - Notify the executor of the will** (if relevant).
  - Search for family documents** necessary for filling out **official forms**.
  - Assess your family's financial situation.**
  - Inquire about possible financial assistance.**
- 

### 2 TIMING

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Coroner's control of deceased's body

**It may be several days or more before the person's body can be released from the coroner's custody at the forensic medical centre (morgue).**

#### **Requests for access at morgue**

Apart from formal identification of the person's body, viewing at the morgue is not encouraged. But if you or another family member wish very strongly to request access to the person's body at the morgue, then you may ask for this (section 23, Coroner's Act). Call the **investigating police officer** or the **Coroner's Officer** – or ask your minister of religion to call on your behalf (> see *Booklets 1 and 8*).

#### **Release of deceased's body**

Once the coroner is satisfied that sufficient medical evidence has been gathered and arrangements for burial or cremation are under way, the coroner will sign a '**coroner's certificate**' authorising the release of the person's body for burial or cremation.

After you have given written permission to a funeral director to act on your behalf, they will sign for the release and transport the person's body from the morgue to the funeral parlour. Ask your funeral director to notify you as soon as the person's body has been released (or call the Coroner's Officer if you have any concerns). You can then arrange with your funeral director for a viewing.

If you wish to be present when the person's body is released, contact your funeral director. This may be an option to consider in the case of a young child or if you wish to be fully involved, wash and dress the person's body or carry out certain religious practices.

## Viewing

**Allow ample time before the funeral to spend some time with the body of the person who died**, if this is what you wish. This can be very important and should not be rushed (> see also *Chapter 3*).

## Timing of funeral

Start to *plan* the funeral now – but, **in setting a date for the funeral, allow ample time for the person's body to be released.**

## When to delay funeral arrangements

If a close family member is unable to attend for any reason (for example, if they have been injured in the accident), you should consider delaying the funeral. Psychologically it can be very important to see the person's body and be part of the funeral – to say goodbye.

Talk to a funeral director about what delay might be involved and what arrangements could be made. (Seven days is the usual limit, but an extension can be sought from the ACT Department of Health.)

If the funeral is to be delayed, family members and close friends should be given the opportunity to view the person's body as soon as possible (and carry out any last offices, where relevant and appropriate).

If it is decided not to delay the funeral, then a fall-back solution could be to audio tape and video tape the funeral and/or take plenty of photos.

## 3 WILL, INSTRUCTIONS OR WISHES OF THE DECEASED

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### Search for documents

The person who died may have left **written instructions** about funeral arrangements, written a **will** or made provision for a **pre-paid funeral**, taken out a **funeral bond** or reserved a **burial plot**.

Check in their papers at home; also check with a solicitor, bank, insurance company, doctor, the Public Trustee or Registrar of Probate, if appropriate (> see *Booklet 8*). (It sometimes happens that these items are not located until after the funeral has taken place; if you have searched long and hard for them, then that is all you could have done in the most difficult of circumstances.)

### Unwritten wishes

The person who died may have expressed thoughts to you that you wish to take into account – for example, preferences about burial or cremation, or a religious ceremony, or an intimate funeral, or whether they preferred flowers or donations to charity.

## Which instructions are binding?

Instructions left by the person who died (whether written in a will or not) concerning the disposal of their body are not legally binding – with a few exceptions, including **cremation** (> see *Chapter 6*) and organ donation. Apart from these exceptions, you are not legally obliged to follow any other instructions or wishes they may have left concerning the disposal of their body. Although you will probably desire to respect their wishes, sometimes this is just not possible or in your family's best interests, and you may have to find a compromise solution.

## 4 FUNERAL EXPENSES

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### What funds are (or will be) available?

Before you sign any agreement with a funeral director, you should check that sufficient funds will be available to pay the funeral account within a reasonable time. Interest may be charged for late payment (after 30 days, in some cases); alternatively, there may be a discount for early payment.

### Who will pay the funeral account?

Responsibility for arranging and paying for the funeral will depend on whether the person who died left a valid *will* with a named *executor* and sufficient *assets* in the deceased *estate* to pay for funeral expenses, or not (> see *Glossary*). Funeral expenses (with certain other *liabilities*) receive a high priority compared with other claims on the estate.

### What happens?

#### IF VALID WILL WITH A NAMED EXECUTOR

The executor usually has responsibility for arranging the funeral, including authorising money to be paid out from the deceased estate. Funeral expenses are not the executor's own private expense. If you are the executor, you can have the agreement with the funeral director provide that the estate is liable for payment of the funeral expenses.

#### IF NO VALID WILL (INTESTACY)

The next of kin (spouse or closest relatives) usually take responsibility for the funeral arrangements. In this case, as the next of kin, you will be personally responsible in the agreement with the funeral director for payment of the funeral expenses. You will pay the funeral account up-front and later claim this amount against the estate.

Reasonable funeral expenses can be reimbursed from the estate – provided there are sufficient funds in the estate. If there are not sufficient funds, or if the funeral was unreasonably expensive, you may be out of pocket.

#### IF NO EXECUTOR OR ASSETS

The next of kin are not legally obliged to arrange a funeral. If no-one is available or no-one can afford to pay, or the person who died left no assets, then the ACT



Government may arrange and pay for the funeral. This is done by the Public Trustee and Family Services (> see below, *Possible financial assistance*).

### IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

If an organisation accepts responsibility for payment of funeral expenses, make sure this is clearly spelt out in the written agreement with the funeral director (> see below, *Possible financial assistance*).

### IF IN DOUBT

It may take time to make the necessary inquiries to determine which of these situations applies in your circumstances. In the meantime, you can still start to plan the funeral, keeping expenses reasonable.

### Access to bank accounts

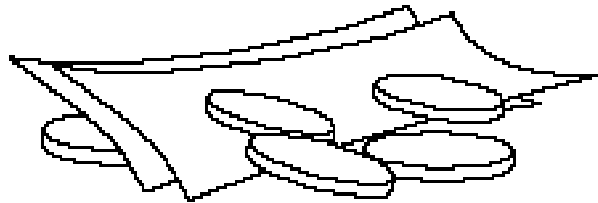
Financial institutions are responsible to see that money held in an account is paid out only with proper authority. They will generally release funds from a frozen *sole* account to pay for funeral expenses (and possibly for payment of other bills or even to pay out the whole balance to close the account). This is entirely at the discretion of the bank. (This applies to *sole accounts*, not to *joint accounts* (either to sign). You are legally entitled to operate a joint account after the death of the other joint holder; *joint accounts cannot be frozen.*) > See also *Booklet 3*.

### Possible financial assistance

Inquire about your possible eligibility for assistance *before* you finalise any funeral arrangements. (In some cases, it may not be possible to determine your eligibility until *after* arrangements have already been made. It is always wise to keep funeral expenses *reasonable*.)

Some possible sources of assistance:

- **funeral assistance by Family Services** You may be eligible for funeral assistance if the person who died left no assets and you feel that you are financially unable to pay for the funeral. If so, contact ACT Family Services *before* making any funeral arrangements; > see *Booklet 8* for contact information and how to go about it.
- **motor vehicle insurance or motoring club** Some organisations may have a **Help Line** and may offer **immediate assistance**. Ask your insurer if your policy covers any of the following (where relevant): **towing of the vehicle**; **compassionate travel** (for a family member to be with you); **bereavement counselling**; **home help**; **child care**.



If you reside **interstate**: interstate **accommodation** for your family after the accident; **transportation** home for **you and your family**; **transportation** home of the **body** of the person who died.

- **compulsory third party insurance** – if a driver may have been at fault.
- **workers' compensation** – if the person died in work-related circumstances.  
(> See *Booklet 3* for more information about compulsory third party insurance and workers' compensation.)
- **private health fund** Some funds might pay a funeral benefit, depending on level of cover and length of membership; or you may have an accident or other insurance policy with the fund.
- **social clubs, trade unions, employers, professional organisations**, etc. It's worth an inquiry.
- services for **ex-service personnel** or their dependants (Department of Veterans' Affairs (for example, a funeral benefit, subject to eligibility criteria); Returned & Services League, etc.).

## 3 SAYING GOODBYE: *BEFORE* THE FUNERAL

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Here are some things you can do (usually *after* the person's body has been released from the coroner's custody) and think about *before* the funeral.

### 1 LAST OFFICES, VIEWINGS & VIGILS

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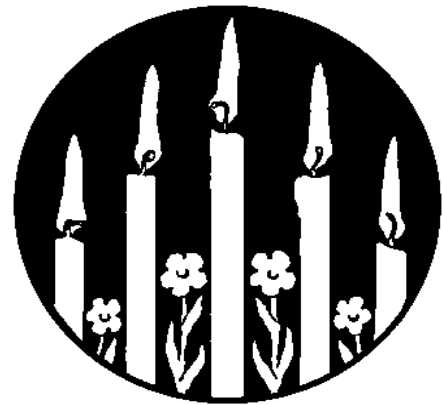
#### Last offices

In some religious communities, it is traditional for certain practices to be carried out after the person has died – for example, anointing the person's body with oil, saying prayers, washing and dressing the person's body. Because the coroner has taken control of the person's body, you will have to accept certain limitations (concerning timing, place, extent of viewing or contact possible); nevertheless, you may be able to arrange for some practices to be performed.

#### ***Before the person's body has been released from the coroner's control:***

> see *Requests for access at morgue* in *Chapter 2*.

***After the person's body has been released:*** discuss these with your minister of religion and funeral director.



#### Viewing

A viewing is where family and friends take the opportunity to see the body of the person who has died. The person's body is usually laid out in the coffin or casket in the clothes or shroud chosen by the family. A viewing can be held:

- at the funeral director's chapel
- at your home
- in a place of worship (with the permission of the minister of religion). (This last option does not usually afford much privacy or time alone with the person's body.)

You could arrange for several viewings – for example, your own very private viewing(s) and a viewing for a wider circle of family and friends.

Some people also arrange for an open coffin at their place of worship just before the funeral service.

#### Vigil

A vigil traditionally lasts all night; it can be held in the same places as those mentioned above. You should discuss this with your minister of religion, where relevant.

> See also *Remembrance & mourning (Booklet 5)* on rituals of mourning.

## 2 BEING WITH THE BODY OF THE PERSON WHO DIED

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Privately and with others?

### **Time alone**

Viewing is a time to touch and talk to the person you love and care about, to remember, to let the reality of their death begin to sink in, to cry, to just sit and spend private time alone with them.

Do not feel that this needs to be rushed; take as much time as you need.

You may wish to view the person's body more than once – if so, do not hesitate to arrange this. Or you might take a family member or friend with you, for part of the time.

You may wish to touch and hold the person's body in your arms. You should feel free to be able to do this. Discuss this with your funeral director so that arrangements can be made.

### **Viewing with others**

Family members and close friends can gather as a group at a set time and place, with people coming and going as they need to; or you could arrange a series of times for each person to spend time alone.

People may do many different things when saying goodbye – bring flowers; have candles or incense burning; have a minister of religion present for part of the time; say prayers, sing, chant or arrange for music.

### **Deciding whether to view or not**

Whether you view the body of the person who died or choose not to is a personal decision. Each person will feel differently about this – but everyone needs to be given the *opportunity* to make the decision for themselves, and everyone who wishes to view the person's body should be given as much *time* as they need.

A decision doesn't need to be made immediately.

Ask the funeral director to explain to you what the person's body will look and feel like, and alert you to possible injuries if you don't already know about them. This way you will base your decision on the reality and not on a fantasy of what you or someone else may be imagining.

### **Why viewing can be important psychologically**

A commonly heard saying is 'It's better to remember them as they were' – that is, it's better not to see the body of the person who died.

You will have ample opportunity to do exactly this in the months and years to come. However, you have only this one opportunity – now – to say goodbye in person.

This will be the last opportunity, in private – for you and others close to the person – to see and touch the person's body before it is buried or cremated. It is a

way of saying a personal goodbye. It is the way of knowing with your own eyes and hands that the person is really and truly dead.

Spending time alone with the person's body now can be especially important if you did not have the opportunity to say goodbye before they died or to spend time alone with them at an earlier stage (for example, before their body was taken to the morgue).

### **Timing considerations**

The time to see the person's body is now, before the funeral. A last time can be at the funeral service (if you choose to have an open coffin), but with less privacy. If you have a committal service at the crematorium, you should note that the coffin cannot be open during the funeral service; however, a short *private* viewing before the funeral is permitted.

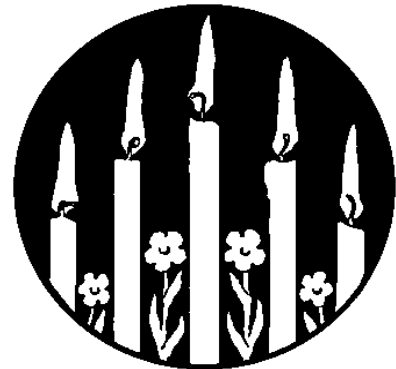
### **Should children view the persons body?**

> See *Children & young people need to say goodbye, too* in Chapter 4.

### **Preparing for a viewing**

Talk to the funeral director and ask any questions you may have about the state of the person's body and what to expect.

If the viewing is to be held at the funeral director's, ask a friend or relative to drive you there.



### **What to expect**

- The person's body will be cold to the touch.
- The person's face will have a different colouring, which some people describe as looking like marble. There may be some discolouration to the face or hands. There may be injuries from the accident.
- If you hold the person's body, it may feel rigid.
- If the viewing is to be held at the funeral director's, the lights will usually be dimmed.

### **When it is not advisable to hold a full viewing**

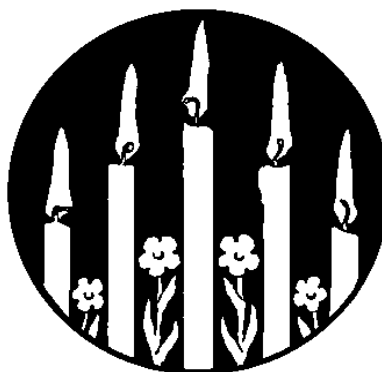
In some cases, if injuries are severe, only a portion of the person's body may be able to be viewed. Or perhaps the person's body will be completely covered by a shroud and you can only touch it or hold it through the shroud. Or perhaps you can spend time next to the closed coffin. The investigating police officer (or the funeral director) would alert you in these circumstances.

You may wish to talk to a counsellor to discuss what is best for you (> see *Booklet 8*).

## Choosing how to dress the person's body

The choice of how the person's body should be dressed is up to you:

- favourite clothes
- best clothes
- uniform
- pyjamas
- a shroud (available from the funeral director)
- the clothes they wore when they died (but clothes may have been cut or destroyed; > see *Booklet 1*).



You can give the clothes to the funeral director for them to dress the person's body; > see also below for other options.

## Washing and dressing the person's body

Skip this section if you do not want to know more about this subject.

Some options:

- You might wish to dress the person's body yourself.
- Or you might ask the funeral director to partially dress the person's body and then you can finish dressing them.
- You might also wish to wash the person's body yourself. This was traditionally the 'laying out' of the person's body. You might like to ask a minister of religion to be present.

### **When it is not advisable to carry out these practices**

Most funeral directors offer these options. However, the condition of the person's body will be a factor in your decision and in the advice the funeral director gives you. You should discuss these options with the funeral director to see if they are suitable in your circumstances.

### **What to expect**

An autopsy will usually have been carried out. This means the person's body will probably have very rough stitches where the incisions were made (from the chest to the lower abdomen, and the circumference of the head). There may be bruises or wounds from injuries in the accident.

> See also *Booklet 1* for more information about the autopsy.

## Personal touches for *before* the funeral

### **Mementos**

#### **TO PLACE IN THE COFFIN**

Mementos can be placed in the coffin either during the viewing (allowing more privacy) or during the funeral service (if the coffin is to be open):

- a photo (for example, a photo of yourself, of other family members, of a special place) (unframed, if cremation is intended)
- a letter (for example, a farewell letter that you write)
- a lock of hair
- an item of clothing
- a poem
- a book
- a drawing
- a flower.

#### **TO KEEP AS A REMEMBRANCE**

- a lock of hair from the person who died  
(Some people keep this in a locket.)
- a plaster cast of the person's face
- a duplicate name plate from the coffin for you to keep
- a photo.

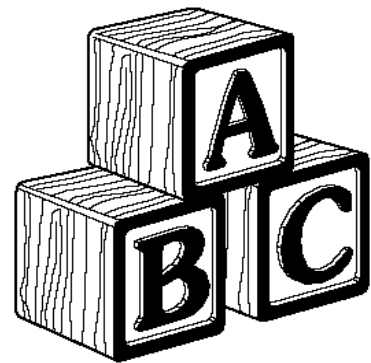
Ask the funeral director about these last three ideas.

### **If a baby or young child has died**

#### **MENTOS**

- a favourite toy or teddy bear to place in the coffin
- a hand or foot print (in ink on paper, or in clay).

> See also *Chapter 4*.



# 4 PLANNING THE FUNERAL

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## 1 YOU ARE IN CHARGE

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Arranging a funeral can be a daunting task. It can seem particularly so when the death is sudden and unexpected, and even more so if you have had no previous experience in doing this. Planning the funeral is a way for you to regain some small degree of control over events in your life.

Funerals are an important part of grieving, saying goodbye and honouring the person who has died. The funeral arrangements should feel right for you. If possible, take your time to sit down and reflect on how you really would like the funeral to be, what needs to be done, what your preferences are and what you are prepared to pay or can afford to pay.

Try not to let yourself be pressured into making decisions you don't feel right about, or into rushing things.

### Getting help with the funeral

#### **Family and friends**

Ask other family members and friends to help you seek out information, ask questions about what options are available and make arrangements. They can play an important role in helping you – but remember that you are in charge.

#### **Minister of religion or funeral celebrant**

A minister of religion (or funeral celebrant) can help you to think through possible arrangements for the funeral. Depending on your circumstances:

- *Your minister of religion or religious community* may help make funeral arrangements and you may wish to follow certain traditional customs concerning the funeral and burial or cremation.
- *You may not have a religious affiliation.* In this case, there may be many more decisions to make. A funeral director can give you advice and names of *lay funeral celebrants* who can help you organise the funeral.

#### **Funeral director**

Most people use the services of a funeral director to help them arrange the funeral. However, *it is not compulsory.* (> See *Chapter 5* for more information on choosing and dealing with a funeral director, or if you are considering *not* using a funeral director's services.)

*Cost* should not be a barrier (> see *Possible financial assistance* in *Chapter 2*). Money can be saved by not choosing an expensive coffin or headstone, and not using mourning cars.



## 2 CHECKLIST: KEY DECISIONS & ACTIONS

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Taking into account your financial circumstances and any preferences expressed by the person who died (> see *Chapter 2*):

- Decide on **burial** or **cremation**. If burial – choose **burial plot**.
  - Decide on **type and place of service** – dual or single service? direct committal? memorial service? (> see below).
  - Contact a funeral director**.
    - \* Start to arrange funeral.
    - \* Choose **coffin** (> see *Chapter 5*).
    - \* Arrange for **viewing(s)**.
  - Notify people of the funeral**.
    - \* Notify key people personally (ask friends and family to help).
    - \* Arrange **funeral notice** with help of funeral director.
- 

### Burial or cremation?

A funeral director will need to know whether you have chosen burial or cremation, and whether this will take place within or outside the ACT. This information will be needed for the **coroner's certificate** (which authorises release of the person's body from the coroner's control) and for arrangements with the cemetery or crematorium.

#### **Burial**

If you choose *burial*, the only decision you need to make now concerns the *burial plot*. A funeral director may bring you a folder with information on burial sites and prices in the Canberra region. If you are undecided and wish to see the possible sites for yourself, ask the funeral director to arrange an appointment for you (and also arrange transport, if necessary).

#### **Cremation**

Before deciding on cremation, you will need to make sure that the person who died was not opposed to cremation and that no close family member is against it; > see also *Chapter 6*.

If you choose *cremation*, this is the only decision you need to make now. You do not need to decide now on the disposition of the person's ashes (interring, scattering, keeping them in an urn). Nor is there any need to buy an urn now; you may later regret a choice you make in haste. And if the ashes are to be interred or scattered later, you will not need an urn.

## Hesitating between burial and cremation? Some options

- A person's *ashes* can be *placed in a grave*, either in a new burial site you buy now or in an existing grave of your family (with the authorisation of the person who holds the right to the grave); or
- the ashes can be *scattered on top of a family grave* (or anywhere you like).  
In either case, a new plaque or inscription can be added.

## The service: Type and place?

The funeral director will also wish to know the number of services and venues involved. (If you are not familiar with the venue, consider visiting it beforehand to see if it is appropriate for your circumstances (location, personal preferences, number of mourners, etc.).

## Common options with a funeral director

### DUAL SERVICE (funeral service *and* committal service)

Also called 'standard service' or 'full funeral'. Consists of *two* services:

- a *funeral service*, held in a place of worship (or at a funeral director's chapel) in the presence of the person's body, followed by a *cortege* (procession) to the cemetery or crematorium; *and*
- a ceremony of *committal* of the person's body with mourners present (and clergy or celebrant).

### SINGLE SERVICE (funeral service *or* committal service)

Slightly less expensive than a 'dual service'. Mourners attend *either*:

- *committal service* only (usually a fairly short service, at crematorium or cemetery); *or*
- *funeral service* only (in funeral director's chapel) + 'direct committal' (> see below).  
In this case the mourners do not attend the committal at the crematorium or cemetery.

### DIRECT COMMITTAL

Slightly less expensive than a 'single service'. The funeral director carries out all the arrangements to take the person's body to the cemetery or crematorium. There is no service and the family does not attend. Can be combined with a memorial service (>see below, *After the funeral*).

Psychologically, it is probably a good idea for you to accompany the person's body to the place of cremation or to its final resting place in the cemetery – if you are physically able to attend. This can be an important first step in what will be a gradual process of accepting the reality of the death. It is a way of saying goodbye.

### 3 CHECKLIST: ARRANGING THE FUNERAL

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**How many services & what type?**

- dual service?
- direct committal?
- single service?
- memorial service?

**Where?**

**PLACE OF FUNERAL SERVICE?**

place of worship? funeral director's chapel? private home? private garden?

**PLACE OF COMMITTAL SERVICE?**

- burial: at the graveside in the cemetery
- cremation: in the crematorium chapel (or crematorium memorial garden – needs to be confirmed with Norwood Park Crematorium and minister of religion)

**TRANSPORT OF PRINCIPAL MOURNERS?**

- mourning cars? if so, how many? (arranged with funeral director)
- personal transport? who will drive? who will inform others of exact place and time? (Less closely involved family members or friends should drive, not you.)

**When?**

- release of the person's body from the coroner's custody?
- viewing(s)?
- service(s)? day and time of funeral service? of burial, or committal at crematorium?

**Who?**

**WHO WILL OFFICIATE?**

- member of the clergy? lay funeral celebrant? funeral director? family members or friends?
- If there is both a funeral service and a committal service, will the same person conduct both?

**WHO WILL ATTEND?**

- Who will attend the *funeral* service (or memorial service)? (close family only? larger circle of family and friends?)
- Who will attend the *committal* service? (close family only? larger circle?)
- Will children attend the service(s)?
- How many people will attend the service(s)? Will the capacity of the venue be adequate or appropriate?

## **HOW WILL PEOPLE BE NOTIFIED?**

*of the death?*

death notice in newspaper(s)? (If the person who died lived in another town, or if many family members or friends live in other towns, consider placing notices in relevant local newspapers.)

*of the funeral service? of the committal service?*

- funeral notice in newspaper(s)? include instructions or requests – for example, for donations to a special charity instead of sending flowers? (A notice is not necessary for an intimate service.)
- if no newspaper notice, who will notify others of exact place and time?

## **REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE?**

memorial or attendance book where people who attend the funeral can write their name?

## **WHO WILL CARRY THE COFFIN?**

(pallbearers) family and friends? funeral director's staff? a combination? or friends forming a 'guard of honour'?

## **What form of service?**

- What do you want out of the service? What are the things about the person you want to reflect in the service?
- What elements of a service are to be included?
  - music? sung? played live? (organist? other musicians?) taped? Who will organise this? Who will sing or play music?
  - prayers? readings? poems?
  - eulogy? Who will write and delivery it?
- Will family and friends participate in the ceremony? (for example, speaking, reading or singing)
- Will children participate in the service?
- flowers? candles? other items? (to decorate the venue? for people to bring? to distribute to people?)
- service program or booklet? if so, who will prepare it? will it include a photo?
- coffin (open coffin for part of the service? closed?)

## **Refreshments afterwards?**

if so, who will organise this? time and place? cost? who will notify others?

---

## 4 OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER

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Who will officiate at the funeral?

- a member of the clergy?
- a lay funeral celebrant?
- a funeral director? (will usually conduct a short service)
- family and/or friends?

### **Clergy**

Will the service be a traditional religious service, or one with a great deal of personal input?

A member of the clergy can provide suggestions for hymns, prayers, readings from Holy Scripture; you may also have some ideas.

A member of the clergy will often prepare a *eulogy* based on input from the family and any personal knowledge they have of the person who has died. A family member or friend may also deliver a eulogy.

### **Lay celebrant**

The celebrant will meet with you to suggest various possibilities and discuss options. The celebrant will conduct a service tailored to meet your needs. A traditional format is not necessarily followed, but prayers and hymns can be included. The service often focuses on the life of the person, with the eulogy a very important part.

Funeral directors can recommend celebrants. Ask them if you don't know of anyone.

### **Your participation in the funeral**

The way in which you participate in the funeral is up to you. Although some family members or friends find that they may be unable to get up and speak, others may want to say a few words, or read a poem, or sing. This can add richness when remembering various aspects of the person's life.

If close family members or friends feel they cannot participate in a speaking capacity, there are other ways in which they can join in. For example, they might:

- write a poem or prayer or other remembrance, or choose a reading, and arrange for someone else (celebrant or other family member or friend) to read it during the service
- place flowers – for example, in the coffin before the service, or on the coffin during the service, or on the grave after burial
- serve as a pallbearer (requires strength and a good back) or as part of a 'guard of honour'
- prepare a program or booklet for the funeral service
- prepare a tape of music
- prepare and/or serve refreshments after the service

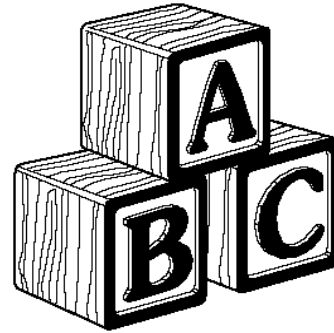
- help to plant a tree or shrub after the service
- help to prepare a book of memories.

### **If a baby or young child has died**

#### **SOME POSSIBLE OPTIONS**

- buying a plain, unpainted coffin and painting it with your own decorations and messages
- carrying your baby or young child into the place of worship (with the permission of the minister of religion) or funeral chapel where the funeral service is to be held, and then laying their body to rest in the coffin
- accompanying your baby in the same car to the cemetery or crematorium.

Ask the funeral director if these can be arranged.



#### Audio tape, photos or video

Your grief may not allow you to take in all of the funeral service; it can be good later on to be able to listen to a tape of it, or see photos or a video of it.

These can be done for absent family members and friends, or for young children to refer to as they grow up, or just because it is something you need to do. Do not hesitate if this is important for you. Some options:

- *audio tape* of the funeral service  
A funeral director can usually arrange this. The crematorium has facilities for audio taping of funeral services.
- *photos* or a *video* (of the person's body in the coffin; the closed coffin; the funeral service; the people attending the service).

Funeral directors can take informal snapshots or arrange for professional photography or videotaping.

#### Flowers

Flowers can be a special part of saying goodbye. They can be placed:

- in the coffin
- on top of the closed coffin
- in the place where the funeral is held
- at the place of burial or cremation.

If friends and family have sent flowers, a few flowers from each bouquet or wreath could be placed inside the coffin.

Flower petals can be scattered on the coffin for a graveside service. A flower could be placed by each mourner on the coffin in the crematorium chapel.

Flowers can be ordered through a florist or through the funeral director, or picked from your garden – or you can have both. Dried flowers can be used.

If you place a funeral notice in the newspaper, you can request that others, instead of sending a wreath, bring or send cut flowers (or flowers from their garden, or plants to plant out as a memorial) or make a donation to a specified charity.

After the funeral you may want to keep and dry the flowers. (If the flowers are placed in the fridge straight after the service, they can be taken to a florist for professional drying.) You can dry and press the flowers and frame them along with a poem you have written out in calligraphy.

### Planting a tree

Some people plant a tree to commemorate the life of the person who has died. You could:

- plant a special memorial tree or shrub in your own garden
- buy a special potted plant
- purchase a family estate plot in the cemetery where flowers and small shrubs can be grown
- arrange for a tree to be planted at the crematorium.



### After the funeral

#### Refreshments?

Some communities traditionally gather after the funeral for refreshments – it is as much a gathering for the survivors as a commemoration of the person who has died. It can be an opportunity to let down after a formal funeral ceremony. The arrangements can be simple or more elaborate, for just close family and friends or for a larger circle.

Unless you particularly wish to do this yourself, it may be best to let other people make these arrangements (your funeral director, religious community, other family members and friends).

Elaborate arrangements can require a great deal of advance planning and would not usually be feasible or expected when the death has been sudden and unexpected. They can also be costly, and your financial situation may be uncertain, so it may be best to keep arrangements simple and reasonable.

There is no obligation to do this; you may prefer to remain with close family only.

#### Memorial service? Some options

- *committal* service in one place + *memorial* service in another place (for example, if many family members live interstate)
- *direct committal* + *memorial* service
- *intimate* single or dual service + more *public* memorial service later
- memorial service later on to mark a special day (for example, the first anniversary).

## 5 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO SAY GOODBYE, TOO

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How to help children cope with the death?

Some difficult questions may arise when children lose someone who is important to them, whether a family member or friend. These include:

- How to inform children of the death (if they have not witnessed or been in the accident themselves) and how to discuss the death?
- Should children view the person's body?
- Should children attend the funeral, burial and cremation?

Much will depend on the age of the child and your ways of doing things as a family. Honesty is important, as are helping the child to feel part of things and giving the child the chance to say goodbye, too. You (or others) can prepare children to see the person's body and to attend the funeral and participate in it.

Ways of participating in the funeral

Children or young people may like to:

- place a special item in the coffin (for example, a poem they have written or a drawing they have done especially for this)
- write or draw a message of goodbye on the coffin (if you have chosen a plain, unpainted coffin)

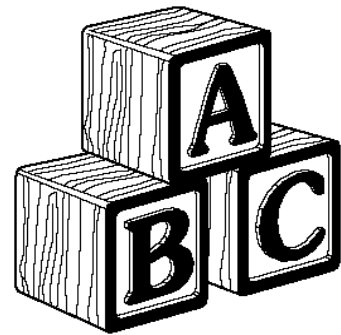
This could be done during a viewing, or before or during the funeral service.

- during the funeral service, read a poem they have written (or have someone else read it on their behalf)
- keep or hold onto a flower or a balloon or other item.

For example, you could give a balloon or flower to each person during or at the end of the funeral service. (The balloons could be inflated at the end of the funeral service.) Each person can keep or let go of it when and if they are ready. Some people may feel ready to release theirs at the end of the committal service. Some may choose to take theirs home with them.

Or you could distribute a candle that each person lights and then blows out when they are ready at the end of the service.

Children and young people may have some ideas of their own to contribute, too.





# 5 CHOOSING & DEALING WITH A FUNERAL DIRECTOR

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## 1 WHAT WILL A FUNERAL DIRECTOR DO?

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The funeral director will assist with many of the practical arrangements, *according to your instructions*, leaving you free to focus on the form and content of the funeral. A funeral director will:

- know the legal requirements
- provide facilities in accordance with health requirements
- attend to numerous practical arrangements relating to release of the person's body, the funeral, burial and cremation
- coordinate timing and make bookings
- supply the coffin
- arrange for a burial plot, if relevant (> see *Chapter 6*).

## 2 CONTACTING A FUNERAL DIRECTOR

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### **Recommendations?**

(from family members or friends? your minister of religion?)

### **Comparative shopping?**

Prices and services do vary.

- Ask a relative or friend to phone some funeral directors to get an idea of their approach and their services and prices; or
- make an appointment with one funeral director and then ask a relative or friend to phone around to others afterwards.

### **Appointment**

Ask a relative or friend to call and make an appointment with a funeral director and to be there during the appointment; their role will be one of support for you.

- **Home visit?** (all funeral directors make home visits at no extra charge); or
- **appointment at funeral parlour?** (Ask your relative or friend, or the funeral director, to arrange transport for you.) You can look at the premises (particularly if you are considering holding the funeral service in the **funeral director's chapel**) and the range of **coffins**.

### 3 POINTS TO CONSIDER

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#### **Your wishes and needs**

Use the checklists in this booklet as starting points. Write down which points are important to you and what your needs are. During the appointment, aim to:

- get a clear idea of services and prices
  - find out what options are offered
  - state what your needs are and determine how they can be met
- Is the funeral director sensitive to your needs and eager to cater to them (e.g. giving you information on options, advising you, facilitating viewings, etc.)? Will you delegate most functions to the funeral director and do some yourself?

- keep in mind how much you can afford and are prepared to spend.

Remember that you are ultimately in control of arrangements and you are paying for a service; the funeral director should provide the service that you wish according to your instructions.

#### **Choosing a coffin**

You do not need to choose a coffin during a home visit. Like many other decisions you are making, this does not need to be rushed.

- A coffin is necessary in most circumstances (> see *Chapter 6*).
- **Cost** is an appropriate and important factor.
- The funeral director may bring you a **catalogue** showing their range of coffins. You can look at the catalogue, note down prices and make your decision later. Ask if the catalogue shows the full range of coffins (including lower priced ones).
- You may also wish to visit the funeral director's premises to **look in person at the range of coffins offered**. If you do, ask a friend or relative to accompany you.
- It may be possible to **make a coffin**. You would need to discuss this with the funeral director and find out about government regulations (> see below, *If you are considering not using the services of a funeral director*).
- You might consider buying a **plain, unpainted coffin** and **painting it with your own decorations**. You would need to discuss where this could be done and any impact on timing.

#### **Written estimate**

The funeral director should give you an obligation-free written estimate. Do not feel obligated to sign any agreement during a home visit. If you are undecided, take your time to think things over.

**OFFICIAL FORMS:** Ask the funeral director to give you copies of official forms that you will need to complete (> see *Chapters 6 and 7*), and **pamphlets on bereavement**.

## □ Viewing

Ask any questions you may have about viewing and discuss what arrangements you wish to make. (These may depend on the condition of the person's body.) For example:

- Do you wish to arrange one or more viewings?
- If so, at what time(s) and for how long?
  - Is it advisable in the circumstances for you to wash and dress or bring the person's body home for a time?
  - What extra costs, if any, are involved?

It is important that you feel free to spend as much time as you feel you need with the body of the person who died.

Arranging viewings involves staff time for the funeral director; you may have to be prepared to pay an extra charge for this in some circumstances.

> See also *Saying goodbye (Chapter 3)*.

## □ Cosmetics

Indicate any preferences you may have concerning the cosmetic preparation of the person's face – for example, a natural look, a favourite lipstick colour.

You could provide the funeral director with a photograph of the person.

In some instances, heavy make-up may be considered necessary to disguise injuries, etc.

## 4 NEXT STEPS

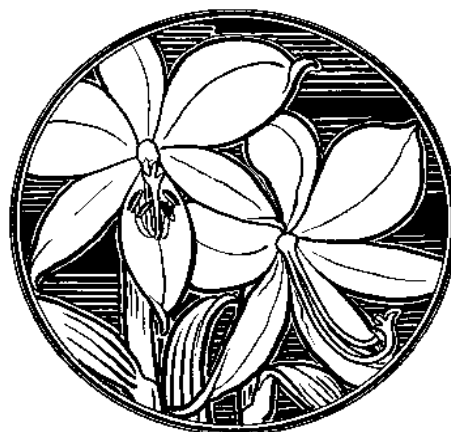
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### □ More comparative shopping?

You may wish to ask a relative or friend to call one or two other funeral directors to compare prices and services.

### □ Finalising the agreement

When you are ready, you will need to finalise an agreement with a funeral director. Although an oral confirmation over the phone may be sufficient for the funeral director to go ahead with some arrangements, a written agreement must be signed at some stage – usually before a death notice is placed in the newspaper (> see below). The funeral director will give you a copy. (> See also *Funeral expenses in Chapter 2*.)



### □ Newspaper notices?

The funeral director can place a death and funeral notice in the newspaper for you; they will usually expect you to approve and sign the wording of the death notice.

## FUNERAL NOTICE

Do not place a funeral notice in the newspaper until the release of the person's body and the times booked with place of worship and/or cemetery or crematorium have been confirmed.

Some funeral notices include the name and logo of the funeral director – but this is not obligatory. This allows other people to contact the funeral director for details, rather than call you.

If you place a funeral notice, you may wish to ensure your home is secure during your absence at the funeral by arranging for a neighbour or friend to 'house sit'.

### **Release of the person's body**

Ask the funeral director to notify you as soon as the person's body has been released from the coroner's control so that you can arrange a viewing at the funeral home (or elsewhere), if this is what you wish (> see also *Chapter 2*).

## 5 IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING NOT USING THE SERVICES OF A FUNERAL DIRECTOR

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Skip this section if you plan to use the services of a funeral director.

Making funeral arrangements on your own without using the services of a funeral director may be a suitable option for some people – provided that arrangements can be planned well in advance. This is not the case in a sudden, unexpected death, however. It is probably advisable to use a funeral director – unless you have very strong support from friends or a religious community who are *already experienced* in carrying out all of the necessary arrangements, and *willing* to do this.

The person's body will not be released from the coroner's custody unless the coroner is satisfied that proper arrangements for the disposal of the person's body have been set in train.

All legal procedures required by the ACT Government must be complied with. (There are requirements under the Cemeteries Act; Cremation Act; Coroners Act; Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act; Cemeteries Regulations; and Public Health Regulations.) For cremation, Norwood Park Crematorium also has requirements. A funeral director knows all about these procedures (and complies with them) – you perhaps don't, and now is not a good time to be on this type of learning curve.

If you are thinking about taking this route:

- > see above, *What will a funeral director do?*, and consider carefully whether you are in a position to carry out all the tasks yourself
- > see *Paperwork concerning the death & burial or cremation (Chapter 7)* for various procedures and forms that you would need to handle on your own
- > see *Booklet 6* for information about the *ACT Supplement to the Law Handbook (NSW)*, which contains a section entitled 'Arranging a funeral privately'.

## 6 ARRANGING BURIAL OR CREMATION

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**This chapter discusses procedures in the ACT only.**

### 1 COORDINATION & ARRANGEMENTS

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#### Funeral director's role

Acting on your instructions, a funeral director can assist with most of the necessary arrangements, including:

- *for burial or cremation:*
  - supplying the coffin (> see *Chapter 5*)
  - giving you the necessary forms (> see below) and lodging them for you
  - contacting the cemetery or crematorium (and clergy or celebrant)
  - coordinating the timing and most arrangements (except personal transport if you are not using mourning cars)
  - arranging payment
- *for burial:*
  - helping you choose a burial site
  - arranging for a temporary cross (where relevant and permitted).

What will you need to do?

- Discuss the ceremony with your minister of religion or funeral celebrant, where relevant.
  - Indicate any special requirements to the funeral director.
- >See also *Personal touches* in *Saying goodbye (Chapter 3)* and *CHECKLIST: Arranging the funeral* in *Chapter 4*.



## 2 BURIAL

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### Arranging burial

#### Choosing a burial site

- Look through family papers or ask other family members if you think your family may have a burial plot already reserved. Also ask your minister of religion, if relevant.
- If you do not already have a plot, a funeral director can help you arrange for one. They can bring you information showing the various site and price options.

You can go out and look at possible burial sites before you decide. You can make these arrangements yourself by contacting the cemetery, or ask the funeral director or a family member or friend to go with you.

Brochures are available from the cemeteries and funeral directors.

> See also *Booklet 7* for information about Canberra and Queanbeyan cemeteries (contact information, opening hours, an overview of site options, restrictions, examples of prices).

#### Options

- Depending on your circumstances, you may wish to choose a single site, or make provision for an adjacent site or a 'family estate'.
- One grave site will have room for the bodies of two adult persons. You can ask for extra depth, which will allow for three adult burials. A new plaque can generally be made, or an inscription added to the headstone, to mark each person's burial.
- A person's cremated ashes can be interred in a grave.

#### Cemeteries in the Canberra region

##### ACT

In the ACT, burial must be in a public cemetery (with extremely rare exceptions). The Canberra Public Cemeteries Trust maintains three public cemeteries:

- Gungahlin
- Woden (re-opened from March 1999 for sale of new graves)
- Hall (mainly reserved for long-time residents of the Hall district).

##### QUEANBEYAN

The Queanbeyan City Council administers Queanbeyan's Lawn Cemetery and applies its own regulations. This may be an option if you live on the south side of Canberra.

#### Is a coffin necessary?

- In a Canberra public cemetery: a coffin is necessary for burial unless special permission is given.
- In the Queanbeyan Lawn Cemetery: a coffin is necessary for burial.

## **Paperwork**

Once you have contacted a funeral director, they will give you the **exclusive right of burial/interment application form** to complete and sign.

## **Interstate or overseas**

A funeral director in Canberra can give you names and phone numbers of funeral directors interstate.

Each jurisdiction has its own laws and regulations about burial, and you will need to consult with a funeral director to make the necessary arrangements. For overseas arrangements, you may need to contact the country's embassy or consulate in Australia.

Special coffins are required. If the person's body is to be transported by air, airlines have procedures to be followed (e.g. embalming).

You may need to ask a relative or friend to help you shop around for quotations for transport interstate or overseas.

*Cremation* of the person's body in Canberra could be a less expensive alternative to transporting the person's body for burial elsewhere. (The person's ashes could still be interred in a family burial plot.) Travel costs for close family members to attend a committal service are another point to consider. Alternatively, a memorial service could be held interstate.

## **Committal service at the cemetery**

This section describes the various procedures that will usually take place.

### **At the graveside**

The committal service is held at the graveside. The cemetery provides a temporary shelter (for protection against the elements), chairs and equipment, and will cater for various religious requirements.

There is no chapel at the cemetery.

### **Who does what?**

Cemetery staff will prepare the grave ahead of time.

The funeral director's staff (or family and friends) will carry the coffin and lower it into the grave.

A ceremony (often fairly short) is held by the family (accompanied by a minister of religion or funeral celebrant, if relevant) as the person's body is committed to the grave. (Or the funeral director can officiate at a short service.)

Cemetery staff will fill in the grave after the burial, usually after the family leaves.

At some funerals, each person throws a symbolic handful or shovelful of dirt into the grave. At others, family members and friends may prefer to fill in the grave completely. If you are interested in doing either of these, you should tell the funeral director in advance so that arrangements can be made.

## **FLOWERS**

You may want arrangements to be formal or informal; you should discuss these in advance with the funeral director. Unless you advise them otherwise:

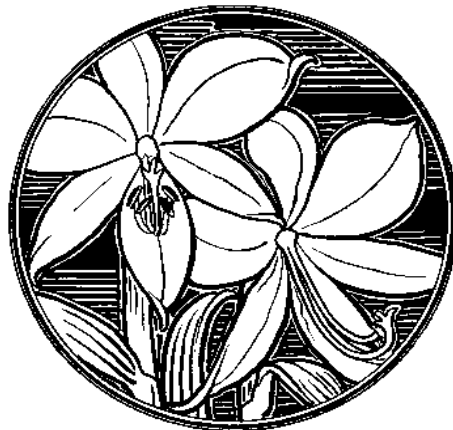
- The funeral director's staff will usually carry any floral wreathes.
- Flowers from the family will usually be placed on top of the coffin before it is lowered into the grave.
- Flowers sent by others will usually be placed on top of the grave after the coffin is lowered and the grave has been filled in.
- The staff will have removed cards accompanying the flowers ahead of time. They will usually place these cards in the memorial book and give this book to you before they leave the cemetery.

Scattering of flowers or petals can be an alternative to the traditional scattering of dust.

## **Timing considerations**

Cemetery staff will need to fill in the grave before close of business. Once the grave has been filled, there is no time limit if you wish to spend extra time at the graveside, as long as you leave the cemetery before closing time.

Funeral directors usually allow about half an hour for the committal service. If you have arranged for mourning cars to be hired from the funeral director, and you feel that you might need to spend more time at the cemetery, you should discuss this with the funeral director ahead of time so that you don't feel rushed.





### 3 CREMATION

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#### Arranging cremation

In a coronial death, cremation can take place after the coroner has issued a **coroner's certificate** authorising cremation (> see also *Chapter 2*).

#### When cremation must not take place

##### Cremation should not take place if:

- the person who died objected to cremation in the presence of two witnesses
  - the person who died left written instructions directing that their body not be cremated
  - the nearest relatives\* have not been informed of the proposed cremation
  - any near relative\* has expressed any objection to the proposed cremation.
- \* 'Nearest relatives' include widow or widower, parents, children above the age of 16, and any other relative residing with the person who died.

#### Paperwork

Once you have contacted a funeral director, they will give you *two* forms to complete and sign. You will need a witness to your signature – for example, a family member or the funeral director.

#### APPLICATION FOR CREMATION

The next of kin (or the executor of the person's will) should apply for cremation. The form is required by the ACT Government under the ACT Cremation Act. Norwood Park Crematorium processes this form.

It may be difficult to answer some of the questions on the form in circumstances where the death has been reported to the coroner. Question about cause of death: you could answer 'motor vehicle accident'; question about post-mortem examination: you could answer 'under coroner's control'.

#### ORDER FOR CREMATION FORM

The order must be signed by the person making application for cremation – that is, the executor or next of kin who filled out and signed the **application for cremation** (> see above). In the ACT, this form is required by Norwood Park Crematorium. The funeral director will complete the details concerning the time and date of cremation.

#### Is a coffin necessary?

Norwood Park Crematorium will not accept the person's body for cremation if it is not in a coffin.

## Committal service at the crematorium

This section describes the various procedures that will usually take place.

### **At the crematorium**

There is a chapel at the crematorium. Alternatively, a service can be held outdoors in the gardens. You should discuss the venue with a minister of religion or funeral celebrant, where relevant, and with the funeral director.

The coffin cannot be open during the committal service; however, a short *private* viewing before the service is permitted.

### **Who does what?**

The funeral director's staff will carry the coffin into the chapel and place it on the catafalque (a raised structure).

A ceremony is held by the family, accompanied by a minister of religion or funeral celebrant, if relevant. (Or the funeral director can officiate at a short service.)

Then the coffin is lowered into the cremation area. The person's body will be cremated on the same day (but if the service is held on a Saturday, cremation will take place on the following Monday).

### **FLOWERS**

The funeral director will ask you beforehand for your instructions. (If no instructions are given, any flowers from family or friends will be disposed of by the crematorium.) You can either have the flowers delivered to your home afterwards, or taken to a nursing home or similar institution.

The funeral director's staff will usually carry any floral wreathes and place them near the catafalque.

You may wish to make arrangements for each person to place a flower or a few petals on the coffin as a last farewell, equivalent to the symbolic scattering of soil at a graveside service.

### **Timing considerations**

The service is usually fairly short, lasting about half an hour at most. If you think you might need extra time, a double booking could be arranged in advance, at extra cost.

If you want to know more about cremation  
Skip this section if you do not want to know more about cremation.

### **What happens?**

The coffin is lowered into the committal room and identified. The name plate on the coffin is checked against the funeral director's cremation authority. An identification label is placed with the coffin and will remain next to the person's remains; all remains are identified and kept separate throughout the whole process.

The coffin is then placed in a cremation chamber of the cremator. (There is room for only one coffin in the cremation chamber, so only one coffin is cremated at a time.)

The coffin, along with its handles and fittings (unless metal), is cremated along with the person's body. Cremation takes place at an extremely high temperature (on average 800 to 1000 degrees Celsius).

After cremation, the cremated remains are removed from the cremation chamber and placed in a tray, along with the identification label, where they are allowed to cool. Any ferrous metal (metal containing iron) is removed and disposed of (by being buried in the crematorium grounds).

The cremated remains are then processed to a fine dust and placed in a container, which is identified by a label giving the name of the deceased, the date of death and the date of cremation.

### **If you wish to witness the committal of the coffin**

If you wish, you can witness the committal of the coffin to the cremator. This requires advance notice, and special arrangements for timing may be necessary. Do not hesitate to discuss this with the funeral director if this is important to you.



# 7 PAPERWORK CONCERNING THE DEATH & BURIAL OR CREMATION

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This chapter provides information on the procedures and forms that are used where the death and burial or cremation take place *in the ACT*.

## 1 OVERVIEW OF FORMS & DOCUMENTS

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Official forms

### Before the funeral

Your funeral director will provide you with the relevant forms, help you to complete them and lodge them for you.

**APPLYING FOR BURIAL OR CREMATION** (forms to complete and sign):

- **exclusive right of burial/interment application** form; *or*
- **application for cremation** form *and* **order for cremation** form  
(> see also *Arranging burial or cremation (Chapter 6)*).

**REGISTERING THE DEATH: death registration statement** form: you will need to provide the personal details required and sign the form.

**APPLYING FOR A DEATH CERTIFICATE: application for a birth, death or marriage certificate:** optional; > see below, *Applying for a death certificate*.

### After the funeral

**AFTER BURIAL:** The Cemeteries Trust will send you the **exclusive right of burial certificate** and information on ordering a plaque or headstone.

**AFTER CREMATION:** Norwood Park Crematorium will write to you and explain the various options for collection or delivery of the person's ashes. When all arrangements are finalised, you will receive the **certificate of cremation**.

Agreement with a funeral director

**BEFORE THE FUNERAL:** a written agreement to sign.

**AFTER THE FUNERAL:** funeral director's account: the funeral director's fee plus any disbursements on your behalf to third parties (for flowers, notices, the death certificate, etc.).

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## 2 APPLYING FOR A DEATH CERTIFICATE

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A death certificate is not issued automatically; there is an application to lodge and a fee to pay. **Application for a birth, death or marriage certificate** forms are available from a funeral director or from the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office.

If you lodge an application now, you will receive an *interim* death certificate *without* cause of death *in about two weeks*. Later on, you will receive the *final* certificate stating the cause of death as determined by the coroner.

In all likelihood you will need a death certificate for various purposes (> see *Booklet 3* for more information about types of death certificates and other documents required by agencies you are likely to deal with).

**Tip** It is more convenient to apply for a death certificate *now* rather than *later on*.

**IF YOU ARE USING THE SERVICES OF A FUNERAL DIRECTOR:** If you apply now through your funeral director, they will lodge the form and pre-pay the fee, which will be itemised in the funeral director's account.

**IF YOU ARE NOT USING THE SERVICES OF A FUNERAL DIRECTOR:** You can apply for a death certificate now at the same time as you are lodging the **death registration statement** (> see below, *Registering the death*) with the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office.

## 3 IF YOU ARE NOT USING THE SERVICES OF A FUNERAL DIRECTOR

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**You must obtain, complete and lodge all of the relevant forms listed below:**

Applying for burial or cremation

### BURIAL

**Exclusive right of burial/interment application** form: to complete and sign (required by Canberra Public Cemeteries Trust).

### CREMATION

*Two* forms to complete and sign: **application for cremation** form (required by the ACT Government) *and* **order for cremation** form (required by Norwood Park Crematorium).

Registering the death

You must complete and sign the **death registration statement** form. The form is available from the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office (and from funeral directors). This will enable the person's death to be registered; it will be entered in the ACT Register of Deaths kept by the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office (Registrar-General's Office, ACT Government) (> see *Booklet 8*).

You will need to provide the relevant personal details. Some of the information needed may be found in your family's birth and marriage certificates if they are readily available. (Where an error occurs or information is missing, these can be corrected or added later on.) The person signing the form should preferably be the next of kin.

**The form must be lodged with the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office within 7 days after the funeral.** No fee is charged for lodging the form.

### Carrying out burial or cremation

The relevant forms *on the reverse side* of the **death registration statement** (> see immediately above) must be completed. **You must obtain the necessary signatures and lodge the completed form(s) with the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office.** (Failure to complete the relevant certificate(s) mentioned below is an offence.)

#### **BURIAL**

The **certificate of burial or delivery to crematorium** form must be signed by a witness to the burial, and by the undertaker.\*

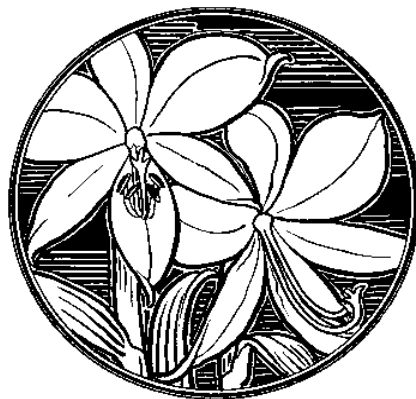
#### **CREMATION**

There are *two forms* to complete:

- The **certificate of burial or delivery to crematorium** form must be signed by a witness to the person's body being delivered to the crematorium, and by the undertaker.\*
- The **certificate as to cremation** must be signed by the manager of the crematorium.

\* The **undertaker** is the person who is taking responsibility for conducting the funeral. If a **minister of religion** or a **funeral celebrant** is at the service, they must also sign.

> See also above, *Applying for a death certificate.*



## GLOSSARY

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**catfalque:** raised structure on which the coffin is placed.

**coffin:** box in which a dead person's body is placed for burial or cremation. Has a tapered shape; the lid usually lifts completely off the top. (A **casket** has a rectangular shape. The lid is usually hinged, so that when the casket is open you can see the inside of the lid.)

**committal:** laying the person's body to rest (in the grave in the cemetery), or committing it to the crematorium for cremation.

**cortege:** procession of some or all of the mourners to the cemetery or crematorium.

**estate:** **assets** (money, real estate, personal property) less **liabilities** (debts) left by the deceased; includes the balance in a bank account in the sole name of the person who died.

**eulogy:** words in honour of the deceased person, often highlighting significant events in their life.

**executor:** a person named in a **will** to carry out the provisions of the will. Responsibilities include paying any **liabilities** from the **estate**.

**funeral service:** ceremony usually held in the presence of the body of the person who died, often in a place of worship or at a funeral director's chapel, before committal.

**intestacy:** circumstances where a person dies without having left a valid or complete **will**.

**memorial service:** a service commemorating the person who has died that does not take place in the presence of the person's body; usually held after the person's body has been buried or cremated.

**pallbearers:** those who carry the coffin.

**will:** written instructions signed by the person who died and by witnesses concerning how the person's property is to be distributed after their death.