

Planning the burial or cremation

Unless your loved one has left specific instructions it may be difficult to choose between burial and cremation. Often family members have strong emotions about burials or cremations and many people make their decision based on religious or secular grounds. In addition there are a number of practical matters, rules and regulations that need to be considered and your funeral director will guide you when making your decision.

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.

The day of the service

The funeral is now in the hands of the funeral director who will guide, advise and direct your family, friends and mourners through the events of the day.

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 a will, birth and marriage certificates, insurance policies and bank account details. Your funeral director can supply you with a checklist which identifies documents to look for and people and organisations you may need to contact. It might be easier for you to notify some of these people and organisations in writing, and your funeral director can also assist you with a sample letter.

The AFDA publishes a range of information brochures for the bereaved. These brochures along with other help and advice is available through AFDA offices:

National Office: Telephone (03) 9859 9966

Or your nearest AFDA member.

*A Gentle Touch Funerals
73 Railway Street
Mudgeeraba QLD 4213
Ph: 07 5522 0099*



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Easing the burden

A practical guide to the funeral process and procedures



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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.

The purpose of this guide is to help you cope with the death of a loved one by clarifying the funeral process and procedures. The Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) hopes that this guide will help you to make informed decisions resulting in a funeral which you feel is appropriate for your loved one.

What to do first

Call for support

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.

Call the doctor

Most deaths in Australia occur in nursing homes and hospitals where authorities are able to take care of the medical necessities and legal formalities. However, when a death occurs at home you should phone the deceased person's general practitioner who will explain what steps to take to get a Certification of Death.

In the event of a medical practitioner being unable to sign the death certificate, this matter is usually deferred to the coroner. Such a case is called 'A Reportable Death'. Your funeral director will be able to explain the process.

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. Your funeral director will organise to lodge the Death Certificate for you and obtain a copy for the next of kin.

Call your Funeral Director

The next person to call is your funeral director. Funeral directors are available at any hour of the day or night, seven days a week. They will arrange transfer of the deceased, and provide information and advice about what needs to be done to begin making your desired funeral arrangements.

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, and shopping around for a good funeral director is probably the last thing on your mind at such a stressful time. Choosing a member of the AFDA will provide professional, understanding and compassionate service throughout your time of need.

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. Remember, the funeral director's role is one of service. He or she is there to serve the bereaved, and to be entrusted with all the arrangements as directed by you and at a cost acceptable to you.

Funeral directors have the expertise and facilities to offer you a full range of options. 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.

Planning the service

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.

Traditionally, the dual service provides the greatest opportunity for participation and attendance of family and friends, and as such it continues to be preferred by many people. However, in recent years the traditional approach is not always followed, with many families choosing to have only one service at one location.

AFDA members cater for the needs of all sections of the community by offering a range of alternative funeral services from State funerals usually reserved for national leaders through to the simple 'essential care' service funeral.

In designing funeral services that are appropriate, your funeral director will outline all the options available to you. He or she will assist with making an informed choice, always mindful that cost considerations may be an important factor in any decision making process.

Decisions will need to be made regarding matters such as the venue and time, place of burial or cremation, coffin or casket, notices and obituaries, flowers, transport, pallbearers, viewing, eulogies and refreshments. This may seem overwhelming at first but your funeral director will take you through the items one by one, guiding and advising you on the many matters which need to be considered.