

Funerals - some issues explained

The executor named in the will, or family members, are usually responsible for organising the funeral. Choosing a funeral director can involve either comparing companies or relying on word of mouth. It is the funeral director's job to help you with many of the legal responsibilities, including the death certificate. A funeral director will also liaise on your behalf with the cemetery or crematorium, clergy or celebrant, and other relevant parties.

Before the funeral

You will need to fill out various legal forms before the funeral can take place. You can get copies of these forms from:

- Your funeral director
- The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- The Coronial Services Centre.

The death certificate

Every birth, death and marriage has to be recorded at a central bureau called the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The information you need to supply includes the deceased person's name, address, occupation, time and place of birth, and cause of death. The person's doctor usually provides the medical certificate, stating the cause of death. Based on this and other documents, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages will then issue a death certificate. This can take around three weeks. The death certificate is an important document because the estate can't be administered without it. You can purchase a copy of the full death certificate from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Autopsy

If there was no apparent cause of death, or if the person died suddenly or traumatically, then an autopsy might be required to find out why the person died. The doctor will call the police, who then contact the Coroner's Office to arrange for the autopsy.

Funeral costs

The cost of the funeral service itself depends on the funeral company and the kind of funeral you choose. It's important to have a complete understanding of all costs involved before the funeral takes place. In general, the full cost of a funeral includes:

- Funeral director's fees
- Cost of coffin or casket
- Costs of the cemetery or crematorium
- Other expenses, such as celebrant or clergy, flowers, newspaper notices and wake.

Decisions to make

In discussion with your funeral director, some of the decisions you will need to make include:

- Convenient day and time for the service.
- Whether or not you want to view the body before the funeral.
- Burial or cremation, and at which cemetery.
- Clergy or celebrant.

- The type of coffin or casket.
- The clothes the deceased person will be wearing.
- Transport to and from the funeral.
- Death and funeral notices for the newspaper.
- Type of music to be played during the service.
- The wake, including catering options.

Where to get help

- Funeral director
- Your doctor
- The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- MoneyHelp Tel. 1800 149 689 Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 5.00 pm — a free financial counselling and debt advice phone service for Victorians (includes interpreter services).

Things to remember

- The executor of the will, or family members, normally organise the funeral.
- The funeral director liaises with all relevant parties on your behalf.
- The death certificate is an important document because the estate can't be administered without it.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA)

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