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## Funerals

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### Summary

- 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.
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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
- **Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages**
- the **Coroners Court of Victoria**.

### When an autopsy is required

If there was no apparent cause of death, or if the person died suddenly or traumatically, then an investigation by the Coroner will be required. This investigation may also require that an autopsy be carried out to establish the cause of death. The doctor will call the police, who will then contact the Coroner's Office to arrange for the autopsy.

### Funeral costs

The cost of the funeral service 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 service fee
- cost of coffin or casket
- costs of the cemetery or crematorium
- other expenses, such as a celebrant or clergy, flowers, newspaper notices and wake.

### Decisions to make when organising a funeral

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

- a 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.

### **After the funeral – registering the death**

Every birth, death and marriage has to be recorded at a central bureau called the Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The information you need to supply includes the deceased person's name, address, occupation, place of birth, place of death, and familial information, including the deceased person's parents, children and relationship information. The person's doctor (or the Coroner) will provide the necessary medical certificates, stating the cause of death.

Based on this and other documents, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages will register the death. This usually takes around three weeks following the funeral. If the cause of death is being investigated by the Coroner, an interim death certificate may be issued, which can be used to administer the estate when there is a delay in the cause of death being established,

The death certificate is an important document, because the estate can't be administered without it. The death certificate is usually ordered for you by the funeral director at the time the death is registered. However, you can purchase a copy of the full death certificate directly from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

### **Where to get help**

- **Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA)** Toll free 1300 888 188 or Tel. (03) 9859 9966
- Funeral director
- **Your GP (doctor)**
- **Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria** Toll free 1300 369 367 or Tel. (03) 9613 5111
- **National Debt Helpline** Tel. 1800 007 007 Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 4.30 pm – a free financial counselling and debt advice phone service for Australians (includes interpreter services)
- **State Coronial Services Centre** Tel. 1300 309 519

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

Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA)

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