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## Burial

If you decide on a burial rather than a cremation, you will have to decide whether to use an existing site, or purchase a new gravesite. You may choose to bury your loved one in a lawn cemetery, a traditional monumental cemetery or section, or in a crypt (mausoleum). Cemeteries are generally owned by local Councils or (in the case of some older cemeteries) individual churches or religious organisations of the area.

In the Illawarra, some cemeteries can no longer accept new grave sites and therefore prior ownership of a site is necessary. Grave sites can either be a standard single depth (6 foot) or double-depth. The advantage of a double-depth grave is that it can accept two burials and is therefore popular with families.

Existing sites will require re-opening at time of burial and a fee is generally applicable.

Graveside rituals vary widely based on religious traditions or personal preference. Broadly, this is the procedure:

-  The service is conducted by clergy or a celebrant in a chapel or chosen venue
-  The deceased is transported to the cemetery in a hearse, followed by family members and friends. (An alternative is for the service to be conducted entirely at the grave site.)
-  Clergy or celebrant says the final words of committal. If it is a funeral involving returned service personnel, there may be a flag ceremony or the Last Post played.
-  Music may be played at the graveside.
-  Mourners say their final farewells and place flowers on the coffin, or sometimes a handful of soil.

### Burial in a Crypt or Mausoleum

A crypt, mausoleum and tomb all mean essentially the same thing: a burial chamber above ground. If someone is interred in a crypt, their casket is placed inside the crypt, which is then sealed.

There are certain health requirements for an interment in a crypt, including embalming of the deceased by a qualified person and placement within an air-tight internal liner of the chosen casket. Not all cemeteries have crypt facilities, so before making this decision, the family needs to do some investigation about location and type of facility available. Burial in a crypt is generally more expensive than traditional burial in a lawn cemetery.

The advantage of a crypt is that it is clean and dry, and it allows for the interment of either one or two persons. Family vaults, within the crypt facilities, are also available.

## Burial at Sea

Occasionally, when a loved one has had a lifelong love of the ocean, a family asks about the feasibility of burial at sea.

Burial at sea within Australian territorial waters, exclusive economic zone and continental shelf is covered by the Environmental Protection (Sea Dumping Act) 1981 administered by the federal Department of the Environment.

You will need to acquire a permit for burial of bodies at sea. However, permits are usually only granted in cases of a strong connection to the sea (for example, lifelong service in the Navy.)

### ***These are the requirements for burial at sea in Australia:***

- The body must not be embalmed or placed in a casket. It must be sewn into a weighted shroud.
- The burial must be in water deeper than 2,000 metres (6,600 ft) and not interfere with shipping, fishing or undersea communications.
- Australian Defence Force vessels engaged in armed conflicts or emergency situations are exempt from these requirements.

[Note: you do not need a permit to scatter ashes at sea.]

## Natural Burial.

Although not currently a common practice in Australia, there is a growing interest in natural burials.

Natural burial is a process by which the body of a deceased person is interred in the soil in a manner that does not inhibit decomposition and allows the body to recycle naturally. It is seen as an alternative to contemporary Western burial methods. Subject to State and Local Government rulings, natural burials may take place on both private land and in any cemetery that will accommodate this technique.

Prior research is required by the person electing a natural burial as not all local government authorities allow this style of burial. Currently there are no natural burial site facilities in the Illawarra. Natural burial facilities exist in the Shoalhaven and further information can be found at:

<http://shoalhaven.public-cemeteries.net/natural-burial>

### A brief overview

- Every Natural Burial must comply with the Public Health Regulation (Disposal of Bodies) 2002 (Regulation) under the Public Health Act of NSW.
- The body is be prepared without chemical preservatives or disinfectants such as embalming fluid that may destroy the microbial decomposers active in breaking the body down.
- The deceased may be buried in a biodegradable coffin, casket, or shroud.



- The grave does not use a burial vault or outer burial container that prohibits the body's contact with soil.
- The grave should be dug to a depth shallow enough to allow microbial activity similar to that found in composting.
- Often burials take place with no obvious signs, i.e. headstone or plaques, and family members are given location details of the burial sites.

