
Funerals – an Overview

Most people are faced with having to arrange a funeral at a time of great sorrow, and the whole process can seem overwhelming. The information below will help you understand what to do in various circumstances.

If someone dies, what's the first thing I should do?

When someone dies at home, the first thing to do is to call the family doctor. The family doctor will attend and confirm the cause of death, and will complete a death certificate (and a cremation certificate if required).

Once the doctor has left, you can then contact Wollongong City Funerals to arrange the transfer of your loved one to our Funeral Home. Don't worry if it's really late or early. We are available 24 hours a day, so contact us at whatever time suits you.

What if my family doctor cannot be contacted: what do I do?

If your family doctor isn't available, contact the Radio Doctor Service on 4228 5522 if you live within the Illawarra area. The radio doctor can provide an interim certificate announcing life extinct. Transfer of the deceased to Wollongong City Funerals can still take place.

However, the family doctor will still need to issue a certificate about the medical cause of death. If he/she is unwilling to do so then the Coroner will be contacted and an autopsy may be required to determine cause of death.

What if I can't obtain a certificate from the family doctor or radio doctor?

The Police will need to be notified, and they will attend the home. Provided they are satisfied with the circumstances surrounding the death, they will authorise the nominated provider to take the deceased to the hospital. There, he or she will be in the care of the Coroner. The Coroner will determine the cause of death, and authorise the release of the deceased to Wollongong City Funerals.

What if someone dies in a hospital or nursing home?

After death has been confirmed at the hospital or nursing home, staff will then contact the next of kin.

If your loved one dies in a hospital, the medical administration department will complete most of the formalities required for the issuing of death & other certificates. You can then contact us and we will transfer the deceased from the hospital mortuary to our funeral home.



If your loved one dies in a nursing home, the staff will contact the family doctor to confirm the fact of death & issue the death certificate. The nursing home will then contact us to organise the transfer to our funeral home.

What if someone dies in an accident, or away from home?

If the death is sudden or the result of an accident and the cause of death is not confirmed, then the Police will need to be notified. (The Ambulance Service may do this if they have attended at the place of death.) It is important that the body not be moved or disturbed until Police have finished their initial investigations. The Police will notify the government-appointed undertaker to transfer the deceased to the mortuary. At this point the deceased person is under the care of the Coroner.

The coroner will then investigate and determine the cause of death. This may involve a post mortem. Once the deceased person has been transferred to the designated Mortuary you can contact us to make funeral arrangements. We will liaise with the Coroner to ascertain when the person can be released into our care and when a funeral can take place. You have the right to contact your funeral director of choice, and you are under no obligation to use the government-appointed undertaker who transferred the deceased person to the mortuary at the time of death.

If a death occurs while a person is travelling, or holidaying at a location away from home, you should contact us as soon as possible so that we can make the necessary arrangements to have your loved one returned home. Depending on where the death occurred this may be undertaken via air or by road by a specialist mortuary transfer company.

Is it possible to plan a funeral in advance?

Yes. Doing so can offer emotional and financial security for both you and your family. By preplanning a funeral you will get the kind of service you want and your family will be unburdened from making decisions at a traumatic time. Pre planning doesn't necessarily mean prepaying. If you are considering pre-planning your funeral please contact us for more information.

What determines the cost of a funeral?

A funeral can be as simple or as extravagant as you wish. You will probably find it easier to manage costs if you pre-plan the funeral. By planning ahead, you avoid making decisions at a time when your emotions are raw. You can also take the opportunity to set aside finances that can be used to pay for part or all of the funeral service.

We can work with you to plan a personalised tribute that meets your financial needs.



The Funeral Service

It helps if you sit down with a list of questions that need to be answered, and work your way through them with your family. The first decision that needs to be made is whether there will be a burial or a cremation. Once you have decided that, think carefully about how to personalise the funeral service so it reflects the life of your loved one, and is meaningful to family and friends.

Personalising a funeral service

A funeral is so much more than a way to say goodbye; it's an opportunity to celebrate the life of someone special, and to honour his or her achievements.

The following tips will help you to personalize your loved one's farewell, and make the funeral service unique.

What did the person like to do?

Often people have hobbies that ended up being far more than just a casual pastime. Their hobbies and interests are as much a part of who they are as their smile. By displaying memorabilia, sporting equipment, trophies, photos, collections related to a hobby or overwhelming interest, you add a really personal touch to the funeral. The service becomes a reflection of the person's life and personality.

What was the person like as an individual?

One way to enhance a funeral is by bringing a piece of the person's personality to life. What made this person special? What made them who they were? As you talk about them, you'll think of ways to link their individuality to traditional aspects of the funeral service.

What was the person like as a professional?

Many people take great pride in their career. They may have dedicated a lifetime to a profession that meant far more to them than just a job. If you find yourself nodding as you read this, start to consider ways to include their professional life into their funeral service. For example, for a fire person/police officer, you could use fire trucks or police vehicles in the procession or display their uniform and equipment.



Was the person spiritual?

Through organised religion or personal beliefs, most people have some sense of spirituality in their lives. Often these values are from the very core of who the person was in life. Therefore, you may feel it is important to incorporate the individual's sense of spirituality into their funeral service. You can do this by holding the service at the person's parish or religious facility; having someone read excerpts from a key religious publication (e.g. bible); having the person's cremated remains scattered at a place of spiritual significance to them, or including sacred music from their religion in the service.

Once you have jotted down some ideas about how to make the funeral service personal and meaningful, it will be easier to make the necessary decisions. Work your way through this list:

- Will there be a burial or cremation?
- Will the funeral ceremony take place at the funeral home chapel, a church, the graveside or at the crematorium chapel?
- Who will lead the funeral? Clergy or a celebrant?
- Which coffin is most appropriate?
- What sort of music will there be? (Music plays an important role in a funeral service as we often use music to express intense feelings and emotion. One particular song may have been a favourite of the deceased.)
- Do you want to provide a CD for the music, or would you like us to use an organist or musician of your choice? (Funerals have used guitarists, string quartets, or many other musicians/singers.)
- Will family members need to be picked up in a mourning car?
- Will there be a viewing?
- How will the deceased be dressed?
- What sort of floral arrangements should be prepared?
- Should there be a newspaper notice?
- Will there be a eulogy and/or readings at the funeral? If so, will they be read by clergy, the celebrant, family or a friend?
- Will there be donations to charity in lieu of flowers?
- Will pallbearers be the Wollongong City Funerals team, or family members and/or friends?
- Will refreshments take place at Wollongong City Funerals or at another venue? (Wollongong City Funerals is happy to provide catering on our premises.)

You'll find a great deal more information on our website, and remember that our caring staff are ready to help you at any time. Just give us a call on (02) 4261 4488 or email us at

info@wollongongcityfunerals.com.au

