

Arranging a funeral is an emotional and daunting task and the last loving thing you can do for the one who has died. We have tried to provide as much information to help make the journey a little easier. There are necessary choices to consider when making the funeral arrangements and there is some sound advice for after the funeral.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>MAKING THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>- 2 -</b>
<b>WHAT TO DO IN THE FIRST 24 HOURS</b>	<b>- 4 -</b>
The death certificate	- 4 -
Organising the funeral	- 4 -
Viewing the body	- 4 -
<b>WHAT DO I DO NOW?</b>	<b>- 5 -</b>
You will be asked the following questions about the deceased	- 5 -
Type of Service	- 5 -
Seven Easy Steps to Writing a Eulogy	- 6 -
<b>WHAT TO DO AFTER THE FUNERAL</b>	<b>- 8 -</b>
Take some time out!	- 8 -
Who to notify	- 8 -
Some important documents to look for include:	- 9 -
Help with money	- 9 -
Other Help	- 9 -
The Will	- 9 -
Help with Coping	- 10 -
Grieving	- 10 -
Loneliness	- 10 -
Health	- 10 -
Housing	- 10 -
Related Article	- 11 -

## Making the funeral arrangements

- A difficult time for all concerned

### Burial or Cremation.

This may depend on the personal wishes of the deceased, where you are located and your own opinion. In country areas crematoriums can be of some distance away, but should you wish to have a cremation instead of a burial you may want to consider this type of cremation service. It is less stressful for the members of the family if a lot of travelling is involved.



### Religious or non religious

This again depends on the personal wish or the beliefs of the person who died. Families can decide whether the traditional service is what is desired or a non religious service may be more suitable for his or her celebration of life. If a religious service is chosen then a discussion with the minister or priest about the order of service is needed so he/she knows what you desire and to give information about the deceased. The same applies if you choose a celebrant, it is much more personal if they know something about the person. In any of the choices the Funeral Director will contact the person you wish to officiate, to confirm they are able to do it on the day and time chosen and make alternative arrangements if this isn't possible. It is normal for a clergyman to accept a gratuity for the service and your Funeral Director can do this on your behalf. A Celebrant normally has a set fee, which can also be settled by your Funeral Director on the day, on your behalf.

### Floral Tributes

It is common for the family to want to have a floral tribute on the coffin but it isn't mandatory.

The flowers you choose could be the deceased's favourite flowers, something out of his/her garden or something that is special to you. The price range for casket sprays varies, depending on your choice and you should keep this in mind.

### Music

Music can be played at the funeral if you wish, but again not mandatory. It can be a favourite piece of the deceased's or something that is meaningful to the family. Generally your funeral director has a good collection of music that can be played also.

### Viewing

If you decide you would like to view the deceased, let your funeral director know and a time and place can be decided. A lot of folk opt for about half an hour before the service, so they can quietly have their own time. Some families choose to make it more public so other people may come along too. A viewing can take place anytime before the funeral, you may prefer the evening before. It is better to discuss this with the Funeral Director. If a viewing is going to take place, then you will need to think about what clothes to have the deceased dressed in. This can range from formal to casual, whatever reflected their life better. A farmer who was more at home in his check shirt, jeans and hat could be a lot more meaningful than being dressed in a formal suit, but that again is a family decision. Nothing is written in concrete, you can choose what is most appropriate.

## Eulogy

You may wish to read an eulogy or have a friend or member of the family read one, this makes for a very personal part of the service and lets the people attending the funeral learn more about their friend they may not have known. A favourite poem or verse may be chosen for reading also.

## Returned Soldier

If the deceased was a returned soldier, he/she is entitled to the flag on their coffin and the Last Post. Members of the RSL would place poppies in the grave. If a member of a lodge or club, then make it known to the Funeral Director, so the club he/she belonged to can be part of the ceremony.

## Photos/Memento

Mementos may be placed in the coffin at the time of viewing or if no viewing is held then make arrangements to have them placed there by the Funeral Director. You may like to have a photo of the deceased placed on his/her coffin during the church service, this will be removed and returned to you later.

## Casket/Coffin

Having to make a decision about a casket or coffin can be daunting, so please take your time, discuss it with your family or friends. Don't feel pressured about making a hasty decision. Keep your budget in mind and feel comfortable with what you choose. Remember the person you are choosing it for would have been happy with the choice you make.

## Pall Bearers

Family members may want to be involved with the service by walking beside the Hearse to the grave, or even to participate in lowering the coffin. In particular, sons or grandsons usually like to participate but it is wise to remember a coffin can be quite heavy and it isn't always advisable for more elderly people to do this. If the family choose to have friends or family participate this way, give the names to the Funeral Director and he will call them up at the time and explain exactly what has to be done. (Don't forget a thank you card for the bearers is appropriate after the funeral) It has been popular to throw petals in the grave, instead of earth and these are provided but again it is a personal choice. Some families prefer the traditional way.

Remember your funeral director will organise and pay for everything up front, the cemetery, the clergy, funeral notices (and death notices can be placed in the paper as well if you wish) floral tribute and co-ordinate all the third parties, once you have let him know what you want. It is important for you to take your time, and not rush into the arrangements. You only have one chance to do it right. Rushing the funeral will not make the burden of grief any easier, as so many people seem to think but talking it over with your family and friends will help ease the burden.

## Related Article

Funeral Etiquette suggestions The death of a friend or loved one often leaves us feeling lost and not sure what we can do. Your first reaction may be to help, but you may not be sure of what to say or what you can do. ....more

Example Service pamphlets to download in pdf

**Your funeral Director is available 24/7 365 days a year**

## What to do in the first 24 hours

- Condolences

When someone dies at home, the first step is to call the person's doctor. The doctor or the hospital authorities will explain what steps are necessary before the death certificate can be completed. Funeral arrangements cannot be completed until the death certificate has been signed. Relatively few people die at home in Australia today, which means that most of the time the hospital or other authorities will take care of the medical necessities and formalities.



### The death certificate

The death certificate is the official registration of death. It is signed by the doctor who pronounces the death and must be lodged with the relevant State Government office. In most States, this office is known as the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Your funeral director will usually organise lodgement for you. A copy of the death certificate for the next of kin is usually arranged by the funeral director - this may take several weeks. In unusual circumstances, for example if an autopsy or coronial inquiry is conducted, it could take eight weeks to several months to issue the death certificate. The death information form provides the information for the certified death certificate, so great care should be taken when providing this information. This form can be filled in from the clients page.

### Organising the funeral

Funerals are arranged by a funeral director undertaking your instructions. They will arrange for the body to be moved from the place of death and will obtain certificates for the burial or cremation service. A form has to be filled out and signed by the next of kin for a cremation and a cremation permit has to be obtained by the funeral director. The funeral director can also arrange other matters such as newspaper notices, floral and clergy. If you don't know who to contact, the Funeral Directors' Association in your State can help. Funeral costs can vary considerably. It is important to know what you are getting and how much it will cost. Don't let yourself spend more than you can afford. The funeral director should provide a written quotation of what will be provided in the costs. The Will may provide for the cost of the funeral arrangements as well as specifying whether burial or cremation is preferred.

### Viewing the body

You have the option of viewing the body. Some people find this can help them. It gives you a chance to say your personal goodbyes. It can also help if you see the person who has died is now at peace, especially if they were suffering before they died.

## What do I do now?

When someone close to you passes away, it is very emotionally draining and not always easy to think clearly. Remember you do not have to rush into your funeral arrangements. The following will help you prepare for the Funeral:

1. Contact family and friend, your minister of religion or someone you feel will offer you support
2. Share your grief. Talk about the person who has died. You don't have to be strong for everyone else.
3. At a time convenient to you call your local Funeral Director to set a time for an appointment.
4. The Funeral Arranger will ask you for information required for the registration of the death.
5. The arranger will then discuss the type of funeral you would like.



## You will be asked the following questions about the deceased

1. Full name, address, occupation and religion
2. Date and place of birth
3. Years of residence in Australian States
4. Fathers full name and occupation
5. Mothers full name, maiden surname and occupation
6. Place, date, and full name of spouse for ALL marriages
7. Full name and ages of ALL children (living and deceased)

## Type of Service

Would you prefer Burial or Cremation?

Would you like a service in a church or at the graveside.

Would you like a religious or non religious service

The arrangers will book a time and day for the funeral that is suitable for you.

Please remember you do NOT have to rush into your **arrangements**. Grief will not disappear once the funeral is over. The funeral is a very important part of your grieving, it is better to plan it well and make sure the arrangements meet you and your family's needs.

## Resources: Personal Profile Booklet

download the booklet in PDF to fill in the information needed to register the death and any preferences.

## Seven Easy Steps to Writing a Eulogy

Both writing and delivering a eulogy are emotional, but at the same time a step towards healing. It's never easy to put into words what someone's life meant to you and to summarize their life in just a few minutes. By following the seven steps below you'll be on your way to creating a memorable and heart felt eulogy.

**Step One:** Gather information. Jot down as many personal notes about the deceased as possible. Look at photos. Flipping through photo albums may remind you of important qualities and memories of the person who died. Answer a few questions: What made your loved one truly happy? What inspired you to write this eulogy? What were your loved one's passions? What will you remember most about this person? Keep in mind that a eulogy is not a biography but more your personal thoughts and remembrances from your point of view. You may want to ask co-workers, friends and others for their stories and memories. You should see some repetition in your notes and this will lead to the main theme.

**Step Two:** Begin to organize your content. Outline the eulogy in these steps: I. A beginning to establish your theme. II. A middle section to build on your theme with personal stories, information, quotes, comments, sayings, poems and other content. This information should make up 90% of the eulogy. III. A short conclusion to summarize your thoughts and restate your theme.

**Step Three:** Work first on the middle section (Part II). Once you have this part the beginning and summary will be easy. Develop the outline by grouping similar themes from your notes from Step 1. For example, you might want to gather all the achievements together. Merge the comments about the deceased's philosophy of life.

**Step Four:** Organize the conclusion (Part III). A conclusion reminds the listeners of the theme and imprints the strong feeling you have about the loss. The key is to conclude effectively and quickly. Here is an example: "We will all miss Jackie's sense of humor, her talent for knowing what is really important in life and her famous chocolate chip cookies" (a little humour doesn't hurt as long as it's not offensive to anyone). "Her example lives as an inspiration for all of us to follow."

**Step Five:** Write the beginning of the eulogy (Part I). This usually starts with an attention getter. It will set the theme and can be in the form of a short story, a poem, a saying, lyrics to a song. It will introduce the goal and theme you used when you began the process.

**Step Six:** Polish it up. Your best bet is to walk away from it for a few hours or overnight if possible. Work on it so it sounds like a conversation. You want to talk to the audience as naturally as possible.

**Key tips:** Keep it short, 4-8 minutes long, 3-7 typed pages. Type it out using 14 pt type so it's easy to read. Vary sentence length. Number the pages. Practice the eulogy aloud and time yourself. Read it to friends and family and get their feedback. Edit where necessary. Keep the content in good taste and keep it positive.

**Step Seven:** Delivering the eulogy. While normally speakers do not read word-for-word, because you are more than likely going to be emotional, don't be afraid to read word for word. This way you won't leave out any key points you or others wanted said. If making eye contact with members of the audience will make you emotional, either try and keep your eyes on the page or look just over the top of the audience to the back of the room. Feel free to pause, take a deep breath and drink some water. Everyone will understand. They are emotionally distraught also. Speak as naturally as you can just as if you were telling someone about your loved one. Speak up. It's very important that you speak clearly and loudly so that everyone can hear you. Keep the written eulogy as a memento. You can add it to your memento chest and share it with others who may want a copy.

By following these steps, writing and delivering a eulogy will become less stressful and more of a healing process.

About the author: Mary Hickey is an urn designer and thought leader in the funeral industry. She is co-founder of Renaissance Urn Company, based in San Francisco. For more information on how to plan a life celebration visit [www.nextgenmemorials.com](http://www.nextgenmemorials.com). Hickey can be reached at [hickey\\_mary@hotmail.com](mailto:hickey_mary@hotmail.com).

## What to do after the funeral

- A difficult time for all concerned

### Take some time out!

You have been through a very stressful period and you need some time to rebuild. Your health is very important so get plenty of exercise like walking daily, eat healthy and consider some supplements to help recharge your immune system.

You will have to notify people, businesses and clubs the deceased was associated with. To help you deal with this print out the **form of notification** and photo copy, you can then have a mass mailing.



If you are finding it hard to cope get help! **Support groups** are very helpful and you won't seem so alone.

### **Related Article :**

How does one start over after the loss of a loved one? It is a monumental task that just feels overwhelming at times. Similar rebuilding occurs after the death, divorce or separation of a loved one. First comes the shock of the loss and an almost denial that it has happened, particularly if there was no warning...**read more**

### Who to notify

There are a number of people and organisations who need to know about a death. This helps finalise the person's affairs and makes sure you get the help you need. This checklist shows you most of the people you may need to contact. **Use the link to bring up a printable page.** Just close the browser when finished.

1. Centre link and Veteran's Affairs if applicable
2. Banks and other financial institutions
3. Employers
4. Home care nursing services, meals on wheels
5. Insurers and superannuation funds
6. Hire purchase companies
7. Australian Taxation Office
8. Telephone companies
9. Medicare (or private health funds)
10. Electoral Office
11. Local Authorities (councils, state authorities)
12. Motor Vehicle Registry
13. Clubs and organisations
14. public services such as libraries
15. Solicitor
16. Public Trustee
17. Landlord
18. Executor of will
19. Doctor
20. Dentist
21. Post Office

Before you start, it may help to look for any records or documents showing contact with any of the organisations on the checklist. You can use these documents to

quote important reference numbers such as customer reference number, Medicare number or health fund membership number in your letters.

### Some important documents to look for include:

- \* Will
- \* birth and marriage certificates
- \* property deeds and mortgage papers
- \* home loan details (latest statement of loan account containing details about finance for the deceased's property)
- \* lease (setting out legal entitlements on a rented property)
- \* taxation records
- \* insurance policy(e.g. home, contents, car)
- \* life insurance and superannuation policies
- \* saving account details (showing where savings are located)
- \* any documents about pre-paid funeral arrangements or burial plots

### Help with money

#### Debts

Relatives and friends do not have to pay the debts of the person who died unless the debts are in joint names. Any debts can be paid from the estate or remain unpaid (commonly referred to as "written off"). You can arrange to speak with your bank manager, or the manager of the bank used by the deceased, if you have any concerns regarding their financial affairs. If you would like help working out a budget or managing your financial matters, you can speak to a financial counsellor. Your local consumer affairs bureau, the Federal Bureau of Consumer Affairs, Centre link, Citizens' Advice Bureau or Welfare Rights Centre should be able to put you in touch with one. Financial counsellors not only help people who are in trouble, but advise them before the situation becomes difficult. They can also advocate on your behalf with creditors. Centre link provides a number of payments which can help during this difficult time.

The tables following show the payments available and who qualifies for them.

### Other Help

Sometimes some private health insurance, sickness and accident insurance or life insurance may pay funeral and death payments. For example, a number of private health insurance companies contribute amounts up to around \$1500.00 towards the cost of a funeral if the person held a certain level of cover and under certain conditions (which may include your relationship to the person who has died, the length of time he or she had the cover and whether a health condition which contributed to the death had existed before joining.) If you find the person who died had any such insurance, call the insurance company to see if any payment is available.

### The Will

A Will is a legal document which sets out how a person wants their belongings to be distributed after their death. The executor of the Will is responsible for distributing the person's assets, after payment of debts, to the people named in the Will as beneficiaries. For estates valued over approximately \$10,000, depending on which State or Territory you live in, a grant of probate may be needed. This process ensures by court order that the Will is the final and valid Will of the person who has

died. If there is no Will, the State Trustee, Public Trustee or a solicitor can give you advice on what to do.

### Help with Coping

Adjusting to life after you have lost someone close is never easy. There are many resources available to help you make the necessary adjustments. Social Workers If you would like to see a social worker, call 13 1021 general enquiries (or 132300 if you are an aged pensioner) from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call\*. Tell the person who answers that you would like to see a Centre link social worker. The social work service is free. Social Workers can help with:

- \* counselling and support
- \* advice about payments and services
- \* advice about community services
- \* organising referrals to other support centre's
- \* talking about options for the future, such as employment, training or volunteer activities.

If you can't go to your local Centre link office, social workers may be able to visit you at home. They can also arrange for an interpreter to be present if you need one.

\*Calls made from mobile phones are charged at mobile rates

### Grieving

Grieving is a natural part of losing someone close to you, so adjusting to your new circumstances may take a long time. If you would like some help from a grief counsellor, or one of the community organisations specifically established to assist the bereaved. a doctor. Minister of Religion or some Funeral Directors can advise you on this.

### Loneliness

It may seem difficult at first to fit into social groups and activities. You may not want people around you. With time, however, the company of others may help you develop new interests. The Citizens' Advice Bureau, your local community centre or a Centre link social worker can put you in touch with community organisations, like Rotary, Apex, and Senior Citizens, which would value your help as a volunteer.

### Health

As mentioned before, taking care of your diet and exercise can help you re-establish a routine. Visits by a community nurse can be arranged if necessary. Many community groups can arrange services to help care for your house or garden. Not all these services are free, however, and some may be provided only after you have been assessed.

### Housing

You might want to stay in your family home. If this is difficult, however, consider all the options carefully before you take any action. Moving too quickly may not be the best solution for you in the longer term. It's a good idea to talk over the alternatives first. Centre link has Financial Information Service Officers who can

give you information about how your choice will affect any payments you receive. You can contact a Financial Information Service by ringing 13 1305, or 132300 if you are an age pensioner. FIS is a free service.

### **Related Article**

#### **Dealing with change**

Author: Clare Evans - "The only constant is change". Change is something that affects us all in our lives some more serious and impacting than others. ....[more](#)

**We hope this booklet has helped make your journey easier  
For this and more information please visit [www.peterjjackson.com](http://www.peterjjackson.com)**

#### **Peter J Jackson, Funeral Directors**

10 Fifth Street  
Merredin WA 6415

#### **Postal Address**

PO Box 15  
Merredin WA 6415

**Tel: 0890411054**