

*what to do
following the death of
a loved one*



Autopsy Arrangements for Stillborn Babies

Parents of stillborn babies (babies who have died before birth) who are >20 weeks gestation are offered a high quality autopsy. To obtain the most accurate information on why the baby died, this procedure is performed by a perinatal pathologist located at the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital. If parents wish for an autopsy to be performed, the baby is transported by the government contracted funeral director to the mortuary at the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital.

Following autopsy parents have the following options:

1. Having the baby returned to their home town for a local funeral service. In this circumstance South West Funerals or another service as per the wishes of the parents will transport the baby home. The transport cost to and from RBWH Mortuary are covered by the South West Hospital Health Service.
2. Having their baby cremated prior to return home. Most funeral directors in Brisbane will provide a cremation service at no charge, however administrative costs may still apply. The names of potential funeral directors who provide this service can be provided to the parents and maternity staff by South West Funerals.

Contact us

South West Hospital and Health Service
44–46 Bungil Street
ROMA QLD 4455

Post: PO Box 1006
ROMA QLD 4455

Phone: (07) 4505 1534

Email: SWHHS-Consumer_feedback@health.qld.gov.au

Web: www.health.qld.gov.au/southwest

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following the death of a family member or loved one



Our deepest sympathies are with you
as you grieve for your loved one.

We appreciate this is a difficult time
for you, your family and friends.

This booklet aims to help answer some common questions following the death of a family member. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to ask to see/be referred to a South West Hospital and Health Service Social Worker.

What should I do following the death of my loved one?

A funeral director needs to be selected by family or friends as soon possible after the death.

The role of the funeral director is to provide advice, guidance and information about the options available to you when planning a funeral. It is important to be aware that funeral costs can vary depending on the funeral director you choose and the type of service you require. If you have not selected a funeral director you can refer to the yellow pages directory or website at www.yellowpages.com.au. Alternatively you can access the Australian Funeral Directors Association website at www.afda.org.au which lists registered funeral directors.

Once a funeral director is contacted by the authorised family member or friend [if no family], the deceased is transferred into the funeral home's care.

*A funeral is an important occasion for family and friends
to pay tribute to the life of the deceased person.
It is an opportunity for family and friends
to share their grief and commemorate the life lost.*



Leaving hospital

Can I view my loved one?

We understand that viewing a loved one can be an important part of the grieving process even if you have been with them as they passed. It can help accept the reality of the loss, and for some, it is a chance to say goodbye.

If you wish to organise a viewing at the hospital after your loved one has been moved to the hospital morgue, please contact the hospital (preferably during business hours) and ask to speak to the nurse in charge. You will need a pre-arranged appointment so that a staff member is available to escort you.

Talk to your funeral director if you would like to request a viewing at the funeral home.

What about my loved one's personal belongings?

Please speak to the nurse in charge to ensure you have been given all of your loved one's personal belongings. These will usually be given to the listed next of kin or legal guardian. If there are still items to be collected, contact the hospital as soon as possible after death to arrange a suitable collection time.

What should I do about medical equipment or medications used by my loved one?

Speak to the nurse in charge if you are concerned about what to do with medical equipment or medication.

How long does my loved one stay in the hospital?

The funeral director cannot arrange transfer until the cause of death certificate has been completed by the doctor who reviews your loved one at the time of their death or soon after.

Leaving hospital (*continued*)

Coroner's cases

In cases of unexpected death or reportable death, your loved one's death will need to be reported to the Coroners Court of Queensland by the hospital doctor or police.

In some cases of unexpected death, the Coroner may wish to have your loved one and their medical records further examined (autopsy). If this occurs, your loved one's body will be released from the hospital morgue to the government-contracted funeral director for transportation to the nearest Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Service. After the examination is completed, your loved one will be transported back to the mortuary in the town where the death occurred by the government-contracted funeral director. The fees for these conveyances are paid for by the Coroners Court of Queensland.

If the mortuary where your loved one was collected from is not the town/city where you intend to bury or cremate your loved one, the next of kin, Enduring Power of Attorney or legal guardian for your loved one can either contact the Coronial Family Services Counsellor (*see below*) or ask the Queensland Police Service Case Officer to advise the Coronial Family Services Counsellor where you would like your loved one transported to for burial or cremation.

If this town/city is a shorter distance or the same distance as the location of death/mortuary from Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Service, the Coroners Court of Queensland may cover this cost. Otherwise the cost of transportation by the funeral director to the location of the family's choice is the responsibility of the family/guardian/trust.

Obtaining the death certificate after an autopsy

The treating doctor is unable to complete a death certificate for your loved one if they are transported to the Coroner for autopsy. Once the autopsy is completed, the Coroners Court of Queensland will submit a death certificate to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Application can be made to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages for a copy of the death certificate. This can be done online or the social worker will assist you to make this application.

Coronial Family Services Counsellor contact details:

Ph: (07) 3000 9342 or 1800 449 171 • Email: fss_counsellors@health.qld.gov.au

Arranging the funeral

Who organises the funeral?

If possible, it is helpful for families to discuss their wishes regarding the funeral service, prior to meeting with the funeral director.

Issues that can be discussed include:

- Burial or cremation of the deceased person
- The date, time and venue of the service e.g. church, graveside etc
- Disposition of the ashes
- Choosing cemetery plot for burial
- Music, decorations, flowers or symbols of the person's life
- Option for a viewing
- Eulogy
- Coffin type
- After funeral refreshment/wake.

Liaising with the funeral director

The funeral director assists you with many practical tasks.

Tasks may include:

- Transfer of the deceased person from place of death to the funeral home
- Personal consultation with you and your family about funeral service
- Collection of medical certificates and notification of death to appropriate authorities
- Organising the funeral order of service based on the choices you have made.

Arranging the funeral (*continued*)

How do we pay for the funeral?

The person who contacts the funeral director and orders the funeral is legally responsible for the cost of the funeral.

Some funeral directors require a deposit. Often, the money for the funeral costs will come from the deceased estate or pre-arranged plan. The bank or financial institution will usually release funds from the account to the authorised delegate on provision of the invoice from the funeral home or pay the funeral home directly.

You may also be able to access funds through your loved one's insurance or superannuation fund depending on the policy and level of cover. Some policies and companies allow for advance payments. If the insurance company requests official confirmation of death, the funeral director may fax a copy of the cause of death certificate to the insurance company on your request.

If you are having financial difficulties and cannot afford the cost of a funeral, please visit the Coroners Court of Queensland webpage:

www.courts.qld.gov.au/courts/coroners-court/funeral-assistance.

A Funeral Assistance Fact Sheet can be downloaded from this webpage which provides detailed information on assistance which may be available to you.

Is there someone we can speak to?

We understand this is a difficult time for you and your family. If you wish to speak to someone, please ask the nurse to contact the social worker or your chosen pastoral care/clergy.

You may also wish to speak to your General Practitioner to organise a referral to a suitable medical professional to support you through this difficult time.

*You can shed tears that they are gone,
or you can smile because they lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that they will come back,
or you can open your eyes and see all that they have left.*

*Your heart can be empty because you can't see them,
or you can be full of love that you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.*

*You can remember them and only that they are going,
or you can cherish their memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back,
or you can do what they would want:
smile, open your eyes, love and go on.*

Anonymous



Legal requirements and responsibilities

The death certificate

The death certificate is the official registration of death. It is completed by the Treating Doctor and the funeral director and then the funeral director lodges this with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. An official copy of the death certificate is forwarded to the next of kin. If further copies are needed these can be obtained by you from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages for a fee. You will need to provide proof of identification as well as payment of the fee. The funeral director may assist you to obtain a death certificate and include the cost in their overall fees.

Legal Documentation – the Will

The Will is a legal document that sets out a person's wishes with regards to the distribution of their assets and possessions and other personal preferences. Requests for special funeral arrangements may be included in the person's Will.

Executor of the Will

The Executor of the Will is responsible for distributing the person's assets to the people named in the Will as beneficiaries. Your solicitor can give advice about administration of the estate. The administration of the estate may be more difficult if there is not a Will. The Public Trustee or a solicitor can give you advice about what to do in these circumstances.

Other important information

What is a pre-paid funeral?

A pre-paid funeral is where a person has purchased their funeral in advance. This is a contractual agreement between the person and the funeral director whereby the funeral type and style preferences have already been documented in a contract and the funeral costs paid for at the time of purchase. The payment is invested with an independently managed funeral fund and is released to the funeral director once the contracted funeral service is completed.

What is a pre-arranged funeral?

A pre-arranged funeral is where the person has already discussed the type and style of funeral with a funeral director and their preferences have been recorded. It is the responsibility of the Executor of the person's Will to arrange the funeral and to pay for it at the time of the funeral.

What is a funeral bond?

A funeral bond is a specialised investment which enables you to accumulate funds to cover funeral expenses. An investment in a funeral bond is only payable on death and must be used to meet your funeral expenses. The bond accumulated does not guarantee against rising prices.

Other important information *(continued)*

Insurance policies

Sometimes the deceased's private health insurance, sickness and accident insurance or life insurance policies may pay funeral and other expenses. The contribution depends on the level of cover and certain conditions such as your relationship to the person who has died, the length of time he or she had the cover or whether a health condition that contributed to the death had existed before joining.

What is a State-assisted funeral?

If a person dies and has inadequate funds, the Justice and Attorney-General Department arrange a burial or cremation. An application for an Assisted Burial can be made at the nearest magistrate's court. An assessment is conducted whereby applicants are asked to provide proof of their income as well as that of the deceased person.

Further information can be found at the following website:

www.courts.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/84581/m-osc-burials-assistance.pdf

Contact information

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Phone 1300 366 430

www.bdm.qld.gov.au

The Public Trustee

Phone 3213 9288

www.pt.qld.gov.au

Department of Veteran Affairs

www.dva.gov.au

Funeral Fact Sheets:

- How to obtain a memorial?
- What does OAWG do?
- Post War Official Commemoration
- Payments after bereavement
- Funeral bonds and prepaid funeral plans
- Funeral assistance
- Funeral benefits.

www.dva.gov.au/benefits-and-payments/bereavement-assistance

Department of Defence

Information for next of kin and beneficiaries of deceased members of the Defence Force.

www.defence.gov.au

Death Overseas

What to do if someone dies overseas.

www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/death_overseas.html

Funeral assistance

Information on assisted funerals.

Go to Courts, Coroner's Court, Fact Sheets and Publications.

www.courts.qld.gov.au

Centrelink

Needing help after someone has died?

Centrelink can provide you with financial assistance after someone has died including:

- Payments after the death of your child or someone in your care
- Payments after the death of your partner
- Payments after the death of a single person.

www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/what-to-do-following-a-death

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

Information about grief and support for bereaved people.

www.grief.org.au

GriefLine

A dedicated grief helpline service that provides counselling support services to those experiencing loss and grief.

Phone 1300 845 745

www.griefline.org.au

Contact information (*continued*)

Lifeline

Access to 24 hour crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.

Phone 13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

Beyondblue

Support services and information on anxiety, depression and suicide.

Phone 1300 22 4636

www.beyondblue.org.au

mindhealthconnect

Access to trusted, relevant mental health care services, online programs and resources.

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

SWHHS Community & Allied Health Social Work Services

Phone Roma 4624 2719

St George 4620 2222

Charleville 4650 5000

Mensline Australia

Phone 1300 78 99 78

www.mensline.org.au

Kids Helpline (24/7 crisis support)

Phone 1800 55 1800

www.kidshelp.com.au

Suicide Call Back Service

Phone 1300 659 467

www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

headspace

Phone 1800 650 890

www.headspace.org.au

SANE Australia Helpline

1800 18 SANE (7263)

www.sane.org

Harmony Place

Mental health services for culturally and linguistically diverse people.

Phone 3848 1600

www.harmonyplace.org.au

Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre

Phone 1800 188 189

QLife (LGBTI People)

Phone 1800 184 527

<https://qlife.org.au/>

1300 MH CALL

24/7 centralised phone number for mental health referrals, crisis and support.

Phone 1300 64 2255

Interstate Funerals or Repatriation Services

The death of a loved one is always distressing for family and friends; the event becomes more difficult when the death occurs a long way from home.

Examples of companies who offer this service

[More companies available on the internet]

Funeral Transfer Services of Australia (FTSA) Phone 1800 770
788 Queensland Funeral Transfers (Q.F.T) PHONE: 1800 823
005 Statewide Mortuary Transfers Phone 1300368115

Interstate and international repatriations

Tony Hollands Funerals Ph 07 3392 9919

Sylvan Funerals (07) 3812 4000

If you have funeral insurance, most insurance plans will cover the cost of the repatriation service for interstate funerals.



Sorry business

We are happy to accommodate and assist with cultural needs whilst you and your loved one are in our facilities. The South West Hospital and Health Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers will be pleased to help you with this.

Please let the staff know if you wish to conduct any cultural ceremonies within the facility so we can endeavour to assist where we can.

Please note that if your loved one needs to be examined by the Coroner, you are not able to remove hair or other items from your loved one or wash the body

If you would like to conduct a smoking ceremony in our facility, please let the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers or the Director of Nursing know as arrangements to isolate the fire panel and air-conditioning whilst this occurs will need to be made prior to commencement of the ceremony.

If you need financial assistance to pay for the funeral of your loved one, this can be arranged at the nearest Courthouse . In Queensland, you may also telephone (07) 3738 7067 or email FuneralAssistance@justice.qld.gov.au.

The South West Hospital and Health Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer can assist you with making application for this assistance. More information and an information sheet is available <https://www.courts.qld.gov.au/courts/coroners-court/funeral-assistance>