



HOME FUNERAL REQUIREMENTS

The Australian Home Funeral Alliance provides this information as general knowledge. It is not intended as instruction or advice.

Further, AHFA acknowledges that as an organisation we are continually learning, growing and adapting. We are committed to creating inclusive content that is respectful and representative of the beautifully rich and diverse communities within Australia. We strive to use language that is appropriate, examples that encourage empowerment and images that inspire people no matter where they live, what they believe or who they love.

We will actively work to be an ally, welcoming and inclusive to all people and we are willing to listen and learn. We want to support emerging death workers in Australia and we ask that you tell us if you think there is something we need to improve on. Together we can hold the death space for each other.

HAVING A HOME FUNERAL

If you have not had the privilege of caring for someone who has died, then there are three important things to consider:

First – In most cases you can do this yourself, however, if you have not had experience in caring for a dead body before you may want to be supported by someone who is an experienced or professional practitioner. This could be a doula, funeral director, friend, community member/leader, nurse – anyone who knows how to assist and support you to safely handle and care for the dead body.

Second – a home funeral is dependent upon three things: the legislative requirements of the state or territory in which the person has died or will be disposed of, the safe handling of the body and its condition. Cooling a body does not stop the decomposition process and so some bodies will progress towards final disposition faster than others.



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Third – the majority of what is explained here is in relation to expected death only. When a death is unexplained and unexpected, the result of a trauma, injury or cause unknown, then the Coroner will be in charge of the process, what happens to the body, what investigations are required and the final release. Not all bodies that are released from the coroner will be able to be taken home, such as in the case of severe and advanced decomposition.

In simple terms, a home funeral is where a family, community and/or executor of a deceased person stay involved in the arrangements and give care to their person as much or as little as possible. They choose where that person will be, who will assist them and ultimately set the direction and pace of how that journey will proceed.

Increasingly, our society is examining the contemporary methods of funerals and searching for a way that provides a more personal experience.

A home funeral occurs when family, friends or community are involved with conducting any aspect or ritual in caring for a person's body.

The duration of a home funeral may be hours or days, and each one is unique.

Family, friends and/or community may choose to do everything themselves, with or without assistance from a funeral director or celebrant.

A home funeral is a safe, legal and empowering choice and occurs in the time between a person's death and the final disposition of their body.



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Participation in a home funeral can be as much or as little as any one person is comfortable with and prepared to do; this may include arranging or carrying out any, or all, of the following:

- Spending time with the body
- Washing and dressing
- Cooling
- Shrouding
- Placing into a casket, coffin or shroud bearer
- Creating and holding a funeral ceremony
- Transportation
- Obtaining permission where required
- Completing and lodging legal paperwork
- Cremation or burial
- Any other associated activity desired or considered important.

Once at home (or indeed if you are allowed the time and space at the place of death), the family, community and/or executor are able to do what they feel is necessary to look after that person's body. This can include washing, dressing or wrapping, encoffining a person and keeping them at home for several days.

How long a person can be kept at home depends on the state. In NSW, for example, the deceased may stay at home for up to 5 days; in Tasmania, there is no prescribed length of time. General consensus in the home funeral movement suggests that depending on the climate and manner of death, 3-5 days is a reasonable time to keep a body at home without any outward signs of decomposition being present. Indeed, there have been various examples of people keeping their loved ones at home for longer periods without incident and there have been times where within two days the person's body has progressed to the point where they are ready for burial or cremation; the journey of each body is different and should be treated specific to their circumstances.



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One important consideration when choosing to keep a person at home is the cooling of that person. It is necessary to maintain a cool room, free of direct sunlight where possible and to maintain a body temperature of 5 degrees Celsius or lower. This is possible and there are various options available that make this possible. The use of a cooling bed or blanket, a cuddle cot for a child, ice packs, dry ice, damp towels and/or Techniice (an Australian re-usable product) in conjunction with portable air conditioners to assist in keeping room temperature cool are all options available to Tasmanians. If this cool temperature is maintained, then you are not required to place the care of your loved one in the hands of a mortuary or into refrigeration.

Taking time after a death in a more gentle and familiar surrounding also allows time for the organisation of the practical and legislative requirements and processes which are otherwise hurriedly done in a relatively short interview with a Funeral Director. Regardless of how you choose to handle the funeral, you will be required to:

- Register the death with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Complete a Burial or Cremation Permit
- Make a booking for either Burial or Cremation
- Transport the body to the Burial or Cremation location

NOTE

Please note that AHFA uses the term 'Family' to indicate kinship bonds and relationships of mutual love and support. These relationships may or may not be biological or legally recognised. However, if your family sits outside of the nuclear unit, it is imperative that your advanced care directive and funeral wishes be clearly communicated so that your values are upheld.