

BARE.

Guide to Supporting Families

How to assist families experiencing a death



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1800 071 176

Introduction

Families have a lot of rights when it comes to taking care of their deceased. The only legal obligations they have are to take care of the body (either through cremation or burial) and register the death. What this means is that families can choose to undertake this themselves or contract the services of a Funeral Director to do this for them. It also means that unless circumstances prevent, families have time to decide the best option for them.



Death is not an emergency and given Hospitals have mortuaries and paperwork to do, the first thing families should have is reassurance that they don't need to make a decision right now. Typically, provided the facility where the person died has a mortuary, families have 24-48 hours to weigh up their options. In circumstances where a mortuary is not available (Private Hospitals, Hospice and Aged Care Homes), families should be able to ring a Funeral Director and know the questions to ask to make the best decision for them.



Families should also be aware that they are allowed to bring their loved one home for the purposes of a home vigil if they want to.

The most important thing is that when a family is faced with a death, they are provided with the resources and help they need to be empowered to make the best decisions for them as a family. These resources can come in many forms - paper resources in bereavement packs, the assistance of a Social or Pastoral Care Worker or by calling a dedicated Death Education Specialist.

In the next pages you will find a step-by-step guide on how to assist families experiencing a death.

Step 1. Home Vigil or Viewing



The first step families should consider is if a home vigil or viewing is important to them.

Questions to ask here might include: Does the family want/need more time to be with their loved one? Are there spiritual or cultural practices that need to be honoured?

If YES

If NO,
see **Step 2** on following page

If a family would like a viewing or home vigil, things to consider include:

- Can this be done where the death occurred?
- **Condition of the deceased** - depending on the circumstances of the death, a home vigil may be inappropriate. These are conversations families should have with the Healthcare Team or Death Education Specialist.
- **Support** - is there the right amount of support in the family or their community to organise this or do they need assistance from a third party? Death Doula's are able to assist families with this and have all of the infrastructure (cooling plates/blankets) available. Families should also never hesitate to call a Death Education Specialist for more information and direction to local providers.
- **Infrastructure** - families will need somewhere to lay their person (a bed, massage table etc) in a room that is kept dark and cool. The main thing is to do whatever possible to keep a loved one at a temperature to curtail the body breaking down. For this, families can hire a cool plate, cold blanket or alternate ice bricks under the torso wrapped in a tea towel. For more information families can contact a Death Education Specialist.
- **Transfer** - a dedicated transfer company can assist families with transferring their loved one from the Hospital to home. For assistance with finding a local one, contact a Death Education Specialist.

Step 2. Burial or Cremation



The second step to consider is whether a burial or cremation is most suitable.

Consider if there are any religious beliefs that need to be respected. Also consider the financial situation for the family. Burials tend to be more expensive than cremation. It pays for families to be creative and curious when deciding which option. It is also important to reassure the family that:

- They are the ones living with the consequences of the death so it's important that their needs are also looked after as well as respecting the deceased's wishes. Always find the balance; and
- There is no truth to the idea that the amount you spend on someone's funeral represents the love that you had for them.



Some families may also already have burial plots paid for so they just need to pay for the grave digging which they can organise through the cemetery with or without the need of a Funeral Director. These families should also know that to reduce costs they are still able to arrange a cremation and then have the ashes buried in the burial plot.



The important thing is for families to have access to all the information they can to make a decision that is right for them. Bare's Death & Grief Education Specialist, Claire, can assist with providing this information in an agnostic way.

Families can contact Claire on 0480 091 941.

If CREMATION



If a cremation is most suited, families have the following options:

- **Bare/Direct/Simple/No Fuss Cremation** - these words are interchangeable but represent a private, unattended cremation takes place without a viewing or service with the body present. This is an excellent way to keep costs at a minimum and families can then organise a memorial/celebration of life service afterwards by themselves or with the help of their cremation provider (at an extra cost).

Find a provider by searching the words 'bare cremation near me' or 'direct cremation near me'.

- **Funeral + Cremation** - if the family requires a traditional funeral service (i.e - with the body present) at a chapel or similar and a cremation afterwards. Families can decide whether to attend the cremation or not.

Find a provider by searching the words 'funeral director near me'. Most Funeral Directors offer both of the above services.

If BURIAL



Families should firstly think about which cemetery is right for their loved one. They may choose to visit the cemetery and speak with the local office about availability and prices of graves. Their options for a burial include:

- **Direct Burial** - this is an unattended graveside service whereby the body is committed to a grave without a graveside service. Families may choose to hold a ceremony at a different location.
- **Funeral + Graveside Service** - a service with the body present (usually at a Church or a Chapel) with a graveside service afterwards. Families may choose to also have a wake after the Graveside service.

Families can find a provider by searching the words 'funeral director near me'.

Once a family has decided between a burial or cremation, they can then move to Step 3: Talking with a Funeral Director.

Step 3. Talking with a Funeral Director

Once families have established what they want, it's then easy to work out who can provide this service. By taking this approach, it is also less stressful talking to a Funeral Director. Instead of asking them to explain their services to them, they can tell them what they want and ask for their total cost to provide it. Any reputable Funeral Director will be able to give them a total cost on that first phone call.

Families should write themselves a list of questions before making the phone call to ensure they have covered all of the things that are important to themselves and their family. They should then approach the call as more of an interview so as to ensure they are choosing the right company for the service.

A good way to approach the call is to start by introducing yourself and then saying:

'I am looking for the right Funeral Director to organise a [insert service you want]. Can you please provide me with the total cost of this service?'



Families should consider asking:

- Are there any additional fees?
- For a direct cremation ask about what coffin they use and if this is included
- If a viewing is required ask if there is an additional fee
- If a dressing is required ask if there is an additional fee (this can also take place with your Healthcare Workers at the time of passing)
- Ensure that the total cost includes the registered Death Certificate and return of ashes

Families should always ask for a quote to be emailed which lists out a breakdown of the costs and be aware of excessive professional service fee charges.

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If families would like to contact us directly we'd be happy to serve them.
They can visit us online at **bare.com.au** or call us on **1800 071 176**