

Planning Ahead

Planning ahead can be a daunting task. Starting a conversation with your loved ones can be even harder. We have gathered some simple information to help you consider a few aspects of planning ahead.

Administration

Power of Attorney

A Power of Attorney is a legal document which gives a person or an organisation the power to manage your assets and financial affairs while you are alive. Normally a Power of Attorney only operates while you have mental capacity; that is, while you are able to understand the nature of decisions that you may need to make about your affairs and can communicate your wishes to others. However, an Enduring Power of Attorney continues to operate, even if you lose your capacity.

Advanced Care Directive

An Advance Care Directive empowers you to make clear legal arrangements for your future health care, end of life, preferred living arrangements and other personal matters.

Making a Will

A Will is a legal document that allows you to make clear what you want to happen to your estate once you have died. By having a Will you are able to leave instructions for the distribution of your estate and you can name someone as the executor of your will to carry out these instructions on your behalf. Your executor usually also has the final say about your funeral arrangements, and is not obliged to follow your written wishes.

Choosing someone you trust to be your executor is very important.

Funeral Arrangements

Document Your Wishes

Writing down any preferences you have can make the process of planning your funeral much easier for your family. This can be as simple as noting your preference for cremation or burial, or specific details about the nature of service you may want – or definitely do not want.

A funeral director can work with you to document your wishes, or you can simply write your wishes down and keep them in a safe place. It is always important to let someone know that you have recorded your wishes, and where to find them.

Documenting your wishes does not need to be done in conjunction with making financial preparation. You are free to change your mind about your wishes over time.

Financial Preparation

Making financial preparation for your funeral arrangements can be done in several ways:

Opening a **savings account** and making regular deposits is a simple way to start making financial preparation.

Establish a **funeral bond** (a capital guaranteed investment) which exists for the specific purpose of contributing to your future funeral expenses. You can invest as much or as little as you like, and it can be done as a lump sum payment, or regular payments over time. When assigned to a funeral director, bonds up to the value of \$12,750 per person (2018) are excluded from asset testing for centrelink purposes.

Funeral bonds are not contracts for any specific services, but simply funds held aside to contribute toward funeral costs. The funds contributed, and any interest earned, generally cannot be recovered until you pass away.

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A **pre-paid funeral contract** is a fixed-price, fixed-service contract whereby a funeral director commits to provide specific services at the time of need. At the time of drawing up the contract, funds equal to the value of the funeral director's quotation are invested with a registered funeral fund. The funeral director is then obliged to provide these agreed services at the time of need for the balance invested, regardless if prices have changed in the interim. The items specified in a pre-paid funeral contract cannot be changed or varied. You are protected from price rises, just as the funeral director is protected from service variations. Pre-paid funeral contracts of any value are not included in asset testing for centrelink purposes.

As your money is held by a separate registered funeral fund, your investment is protected even if your funeral director ceases trading.

Taking out **funeral insurance** is another option. This refers to a group of products that are a type of life insurance. Like all insurance products, as soon as you stop or miss a premium payment, your cover ceases and you lose all the premiums you have paid. It is important to consider the payout amount and policy exclusions, compared to the long term cost of premiums.

Funeral Ceremony Options

You can make as many or as few decisions as you like when planning ahead. We would be happy to spend some time with you talking through options, preferences and possibilities, and can document your wishes.

- Burial, cremation, donation to science, or repatriation interstate or overseas
- Ceremony venues – secular, religious
- Type of ceremony
- Ceremony celebrant
- Ceremony content
- Musical preferences
- Eulogy and photo reflection preferences
- Floral arrangements
- Coffin or casket selection
- Private or public ceremony

The most important part of planning ahead is sharing the information with your loved ones, even if it is only to tell them where they can find the details. You should also not be anxious if your preferences change later on; it is always possible to revisit and reconsider any choices you make.

Funeral Costs

When looking at the cost of a funeral, there are two cost areas:

Funeral Directors' Charges

Generally these are a service charge, charges for after hours services (if applicable) and coffin/casket selection.

The biggest difference between one funeral director and another is the services that are included, or excluded, from the service charge. You may find that some companies will quote a low service charge, only to discover that many standard services are then treated as 'extras'.

We always provide a written schedule outlining what our service charge includes so there are no surprises.

Disbursements

These are services or items sourced from third parties. Examples are cemeteries & crematoria, celebrants, venue hire fees, musicians, newspaper notices, florists, printing needs (booklets and cards), IT / AV assistance, catering, medical certification and statutory certificates.

We charge all disbursements at cost. We do not mark up the cost of services and items provided by third parties.

Importantly, GST applies to the entire cost of a funeral.