

# YOUNG Ceremonies

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## ARRANGING A FUNERAL – THINGS TO CONSIDER...

Ideas and suggestions gathered, compiled and continually updated  
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- A final farewell is all about remembering a very special person who is no longer with you. The best way to remember them is to reflect on what they were really like. If the person was fun, loved Hawaii, and abhorred all things depressing, you could request that funeral guests come in Hawaiian shirts and pass out leis. Perhaps your family is more traditional or conservative, preferring a more subdued funeral where guests may feel more comfortable dressed in more subtle colours like black or darker hues. Tailor the funeral for the deceased especially if you know their style and preference for a respectful and fitting farewell which will always stand out in the minds of those present for all the right reasons.
- **NEVER** feel pressured by what others (especially) some Funeral Directors' recommendations i.e. "it would be best to have the funeral as soon as possible so the family can get back to normal" There is no law whatsoever that states that a funeral must take place as soon as possible (however there are different religions who request such)
- Consider your options regarding Funeral Companies what they can offer the family: Ask: What are our options? What costs are involved? Is there a more affordable option? How can we keep costs to a minimum? Ask what the company can offer to make this emotional time as less painful as possible. Do they have any suggestions to enable the family to say goodbye respectfully with more of a relaxed (still professional) service that family (especially the younger who will be there) for a fitting service.
- Consider approaching an Independent Funeral Director who may be more in tune with assisting the grieving and not all for profit. However be careful some funeral businesses who cut corners and can end up being very distasteful – ask for feedback from others.
- There are some very genuine, caring funeral companies that offer and deliver amazing services. Its well worthwhile to take the time to source them.
- Give thought and consideration to all options regarding choosing a funeral service provider and what they can offer you as a family.
- Do you want one Funeral Consultant managing your funeral all the way through?
- Is cost a concern?
- Would you like green, eco-friendly options?
- Do you have some specific requirements or personal ideas that you want to include as part of the farewell event

- Are you looking for a unique, venue ... somewhere different to a church or a cemetery chapel?
- Are you aware that you can have a funeral service in your home? (reducing costs)
- If possible and the family agrees, I strongly encourage allowing a minimum of five (5) days before the service – 10 days is a far better option, if possible (this allows more time for the family to adjust to what has happened), as well as giving more time to put together a (more) beautiful memorable service for all the right reasons as well as fitting in honour of the person who is no longer here.
- When a funeral is rushed, there is often regret later “I wish I thought of this/that” “I just remembered they really didn’t like that type of flower but they loved ....” “I wished I had mentioned about the time when ....” “Oh we forgot to let their long term friend know when the funeral was” And many other flashbacks after the service.
- Allowing time for family, friends and colleagues to re-arrange their schedule, international and/or interstate people who would like to be there to say their final farewell.
- Are there people who you (or more importantly did the deceased) would like to speak or let the family know of what they did together when growing up/going overseas/before they settled down...etc
- **DO NOT** feel pressured to choose the most expensive coffin/casket – the funeral industry is focused on profit. Prices can range from \$2,000 to \$15,000!!
- Cremation or burial? (Do you know what the person preferred?)
- Notices in the newspaper – you may not be aware that to include the Funeral Company’s logo is an additional cost to you and free advertising for them.
- No rules or regulations to have the service at a certain time; if it is not convenient to you – **something to consider** should the service be scheduled for the morning - it will be a long day for the family, rushing around, no time to adjust to this last goodbye. Early afternoon allows time to prepare, last minute adjustments, dress without the rush, getting the family together (especially the young and frail), allows time to have a bite to eat, even though you don’t feel like eating (prevents light headedness or fainting at the service)
- Having the service early mid-afternoon may also mean that your family service is the last one of the day which may give you a little (extra) time at the end of the service without the next funeral waiting on the side lines with staff hovering to move people along for the next service.
- Music during the service, as supplied on CD by you (sometimes the Funeral Director will prepare music if time permits – usually an additional cost – but minimal)
- DVD Presentation to be screened during the service
- It is not uncommon that the (deceased) person or their family prefer not to have a DVD presentation – this is quite OK – this allows mourners to listen and reflect on the person who is no longer here.
- PowerPoint presentation – generally Funeral Directors assist and do a very good job (unless you have someone who knows what to do without too much hassle – can be very time consuming) – there are private companies that provide this service (for a fee of course), however they can take the pressure off the family, one less task to do. Once photos are gathered they go straight to them, they set everything up including the music embedded into the slide show – for them minimal time – for family relief and no pressure – HIGHLY recommend to consider this option. **It is well worth the cost (big time).**
- Should you prefer to “do your own thing” and put the DVD together yourself, STRONGLY encourage you to take your CD/USB to the venue the day prior to the

service. There has been many a moment on the day that the recording is not compatible with the local equipment (recommend you contact the venue before putting your photos and music together to ensure you and they are on the same page – taking this time to investigate will eliminate angst and frustration on the day)

- Music during the service, as supplied on CD by you (sometimes the Funeral Director will prepare music if time permits – may be an additional cost)
- Selecting appropriate music and readings/poems (read and listen to **ALL** the words of the song/poem before the funeral day – may not be as appropriate as first thought)
- Play the selected pieces of music over and over (around the house, in the car, everywhere before and up to the time of the service) – this gives you time to “de-sensitise” the raw emotion of hearing the music at the service.
- Are you aware that you can (legally) have a funeral (including coffin presence) in your home?

In the event the deceased was a passionate golfer, football fanatic, loved sailing, fishing, sport – you can have the funeral service (or memorial service) at various venues (e.g. the RSL, golf course, football ground)

There are independent Funeral companies who offer so many “different” venues to have the actual service (not restricted to a church or chapel) e.g. a yacht club, football rooms, reception rooms, rotundas – and many more – a beautiful option – a plethora of choices.

- Usually three pieces of music – the entrance, reflection time (slideshow – again the professionals know how to time the music to the number of the photos) and walk out. If going on for the burial, another piece of music is nice (i.e. favourite sport’s music/theme song etc).
- Reflection time – allow 5 minutes max
- Committal service following the funeral at a second location (Cemetery or Crematorium)
- A traditional casket/coffin, you may prefer a shroud in an open basket or an organic bamboo coffin (no coffin, reducing environmental issues i.e. veneer polish used on coffins)
- There are many options for “different” coffins e.g. woollen, baskets, sustainable materials that may have more appeal to the family.
- Medium to large sized floral arrangement (approximately 1.2 to 2 metres in diameter) – ask for more flowers less “filler” (lots of greenery and fewer flowers).
- There is no pre-requisite to have flowers on the coffin. You may prefer to “invite” people to bring flowers from their garden to be placed on the coffin
- You may prefer no flowers – there are other (more affordable) options, e.g soft organza (material) brunched and curled across the top of the coffin with a candle in a glass jar (a battery operated candle looks authentic without the fire hazard) – a framed photo of the deceased positioned on a decorated book stand, positioned on the organza (different, beautiful and affordable)
- Printed order of service with photo and text for attendees (Funeral Director often provides the service – consider timeframe and cost – may eliminate additional pressure to the family)
- Webcasting of the service if required
- Refreshments including a cold and hot food selection after the service (again Funeral Director can assist – at a cost – however another time factor – rushing around arranging catering can create more pressure or delegate family/friends to be: Co-ordinator of music, Co-ordinator of slide show (collating photos), Catering Co-ordinator (must be very organised, work under pressure and deliver!!)
- Funeral car to assist family with transport (usually at an additional fee)

- Cremation fee (usually arranged by Funeral Director invoiced to you)
- **NEVER** feel pressured to sign off with a Funeral Director on the spot – if possible leave and discuss with family what your options are
- Strongly encourage families to speak to a second Funeral Company (bearing in mind that some are inter-linked, however pricing can be very different with same options). Not many people are aware that most funeral companies are under an “umbrella” e.g. Invocare covers: White Ladies, Le Pine, WD Rose, Simplicity, Southern Cross.
- Tobins, Monkhouse and Nelson Bros are independently owned however the larger corporate funeral companies in their own right average more than 3000 funerals annually.
- A funeral or memorial service can be held near the time of burial or cremation or at a later date.
- The choice whether or not to have the casket or urn present at the service is entirely yours (not the Funeral Director)
- Having a viewing service or wake is (entirely) the family’s decision.
- When you have arranged to meet with your preferred Funeral Director, if possible have ready the clothing for the deceased (eliminates an additional meeting or trip) at that meeting.
- A coloured photograph of the deceased and if possible some of their favourite soap, perfume or aftershave to go with the clothing. (This enables staff to ensure your loved one is prepared as their real true self – a great comfort for the family be there a viewing or not – often the family are adamant there be absolutely NO viewing, however closer to the service, even just before, someone may change their mind and would like to see the person one last time). Knowing the person has been properly presented is another peace of mind – assists in eliminating further distress.
- Is it important to you that your Grandmother/Mum/Sister/Daughter etc be cared for by a female mortician?
- Is it important to you that your Grandfather/Dad/Brother/Son etc be cared for by a male mortician?
- Personalise the service as much as possible.
- A beautiful and memorable send-off (for all the right reasons) is the best tribute to your loved one.
- This is just a brief running sheet – for information and consideration only – this is NOT a legal document.
- Usually overlooked – sometimes people/family are able to discuss before the passing of their loved one what their wishes are (favourite music, a prayer, no religious service whatsoever, who they would like to escort the coffin out, a special poem or story and much more)
- If possible, the Power of Attorney or a close trusted family, obtaining computer and phone passwords (ie Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc), any copyright documents i.e. the person may have published books, a thesis, other academic works during their career, poems, movies, etc from the patient – this may avoid additional angst down the track.
- A very difficult and emotional time – hopefully this document may alleviate some of these challenges that do occur.
- Did you know the Funeral Industry (within Victoria) is not regulated –anything goes.
- Celebrants are not required to have training to conduct a funeral (scary!!). Please note – dedicated Celebrants take pride in improving their knowledge by ongoing training and being a member of relevant Celebrant Associations to ensure they are current in what is happening within the funeral industry.

- When you have chosen your preferred Funeral Director, enquire as to the time limit for the service (some venues e.g. Altona Memorial Park) of 45 minutes with others one hour (when co-ordinating the service programme, this can create pressure on the family to rush the service)
- You can have a “double booking” for a service at a chapel/venue (additional costs may incur – however in the event of five or more speakers, a single service will be rushed.
- Whoever signs off for the funeral has the final say of the service i.e. the final directive is from the payee.
- If, at all possible give yourself at least 48 hours before making ANY decisions – allow emotions/shock/family pressure to dissipate to enable a more logical approach to arranging the service.
- Would the deceased have approved of their funeral?

Contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I am an independent Funeral Celebrant not aligned with any one funeral company. The majority of my work are referrals from previous services.

**PS – The content of this document is purely my own view and observation of being involved with assisting families during a very emotional time – to be used for information only – this is not a formal document – you are most welcome to use and share.**