A FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL PLANNER

Gently, Step by Step

Checklists for the days, weeks and the farewell ahead

REEDS & DRAGONFLY · CELEBRANCY BY ROSEMARY



A NOTE FROM ROSEMARY

You don't have to do it all at once

When someone dies, there can suddenly seem to be a hundred things to decide, often while you are exhausted and heartbroken. This planner is here to hold the details, so you don't have to keep them all in your head.

Some tasks need doing in the first few days. Many can wait. Plenty can be handed to someone else: people want to help, and giving them a job is a kindness to them too.

Tick things off, cross things out, and skip anything that doesn't apply. Every family, culture and faith does this a little differently, and that is exactly as it should be.

HOW TO USE THIS PLANNER

- [ ] Start with "The first days" (page 3)
- [ ] Choose between a funeral and a memorial, or both (page 4)
- [ ] Fill in key contacts so everyone can find them (page 5)
- [ ] Decide how you will share the news, including notices and posts (page 6)
- [ ] Plan the ceremony, music and roles together (pages 7 to 10)
- [ ] Come back to the admin pages in the weeks that follow (page 12)

Rules and paperwork vary between states and territories. Your funeral director and celebrant can guide you through what applies to you. This planner is general guidance, not legal or financial advice.

With warmth,
Rosemary



The first days

Take these one at a time. Some may already have been done for you.

Straight away

- [ ] If the death was unexpected, call 000. If it was expected, contact their doctor, nurse or palliative care team
- [ ] A doctor confirms the death and completes the medical certificate of cause of death
- [ ] Let close family and friends know personally, or ask one person to make the calls, before anything is posted online
- [ ] Contact a funeral director when you are ready. There is usually no need to rush

In the next day or two

- [ ] Look for a will, a prepaid funeral plan or written funeral wishes
- [ ] Check whether they wanted burial, cremation or another option
- [ ] Find their important documents (birth certificate, Medicare card, bank and super details)
- [ ] Arrange care for children, pets and the home, and secure their house and car
- [ ] Choose one or two people to be the main point of contact for the family
- [ ] Contact a celebrant if you would like one to lead the ceremony

For you

- [ ] Eat something, drink water and rest when you can
- [ ] Say yes when people offer to help, and write their offers down on page 14
- [ ] Remember that most decisions do not need to be made today

Your funeral director will usually register the death with your state or territory registry on your behalf, which leads to the official death certificate.

Funeral, memorial, or both?

	FUNERAL	MEMORIAL
When	Usually within one to two weeks of the death	Any time, even months later
Their body	Usually present, in a coffin	Not present, or ashes may be present
Where	Chapel, church, crematorium, graveside or other venue	Anywhere meaningful: a garden, beach, hall or home
Afterwards	Followed by burial or cremation	Burial or cremation has usually already happened

Neither is better. Some families hold a small private funeral and a larger memorial later.

Decisions to make

- ☐ Funeral, memorial, or both
- ☐ Burial, cremation or another option
- ☐ Public, or private and family only
- ☐ Rough date and time
- ☐ Venue
- ☐ Faith, cultural or community traditions to include
- ☐ Traditional, non-traditional, or a mix
- ☐ Livestream for people who can't attend
- ☐ A viewing or time to say goodbye beforehand
- ☐ A dress code or favourite colour

Notes

KEEP THESE TOGETHER

Key contacts

WHO	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL / NOTES
Funeral director			
Celebrant			
Venue			
Doctor			
Executor of the will			
Solicitor			
Family coordinator			
Florist			
Caterer			
Musician or AV help			
Cemetery or crematorium			
Place of worship			

Sharing the news

News travels quickly. Agreeing as a family on who will share what, and when, means the people closest to them hear it personally rather than online.

Before anything goes public

- [ ] Close family and friends told personally first
- [ ] Agree who will post, and what will be shared
- [ ] Decide what stays private (such as the cause of death)
- [ ] Ask the funeral director about notice deadlines

Newspaper death notice

- [ ] Which papers: local, regional, or their hometown
- [ ] Placed by us, or by the funeral director
- [ ] Wording, photo and service details agreed
- [ ] Cost and deadline confirmed
- [ ] Proofread before it goes to print

Social media and online

- [ ] A post on their or the family's social media
- [ ] Group chats, clubs and community groups
- [ ] Workplace, school, church or club newsletters
- [ ] An online memorial or tribute page for messages and photos
- [ ] Livestream link shared with those who can't attend
- [ ] Their own accounts memorialised or closed, when you're ready

DEATH NOTICE OR OBITUARY?

A **death notice** is a short, paid announcement with the service details, usually placed within days. An **obituary** or tribute tells the story of their life, and can be shared in the paper, online or at the service, now or later.

Sample wording

SURNAME, First name (known as ___). Passed away peacefully on ___, aged ___. Much loved ___ of ___. Forever in our hearts. Family and friends are warmly invited to celebrate their life at ___ on ___ at ___. In lieu of flowers, donations to ___.

Our wording

For safety, leave out the home address in public notices and posts, and consider asking someone to mind the house during the service.

The ceremony

Talk with your celebrant about

- [ ] Their story: stories, sayings, values, humour
- [ ] The feel you want: formal, relaxed, joyful, quiet
- [ ] Who will speak, and for how long
- [ ] Anything to avoid or handle gently
- [ ] Faith or cultural elements
- [ ] Including a pet, in person or in words

Words

- [ ] Eulogy writer(s) and reader(s)
- [ ] Readings or poems
- [ ] Tributes from family or friends
- [ ] A moment of reflection or silence

Music

- [ ] Music as people arrive
- [ ] Song for the entrance
- [ ] Reflection song (often with photos)
- [ ] Song to finish

Visuals and keepsakes

- [ ] Photo slideshow, with someone to run it
- [ ] Framed photo for the front
- [ ] Order of service or memorial card
- [ ] Flowers, or a charity for donations instead
- [ ] Guest book or memory cards
- [ ] Personal items on display

On the day

- [ ] Livestream or recording
- [ ] Reserved seating for family
- [ ] Tissues, water and a quiet space

What will be heard

Music

MOMENT	SONG AND ARTIST	VERSION OR LINK
As guests arrive		
Entrance		
Reflection		
Closing		

Readings, poems and tributes

TITLE OR TOPIC	READ BY	APPROX. LENGTH

If you'd like a reading but don't know where to start, ask your celebrant for a few to choose from. Check permission before printing song lyrics or poems in an order of service.

PEOPLE AND ROLES

Who's helping

Giving people a role helps them feel useful and spreads the load.

ROLE	NAME	CONFIRMED?
Eulogy		
Reading		
Reading		
Pallbearer		
Pallbearer		
Pallbearer		
Pallbearer		
Pallbearer		
Pallbearer		
Greeter or usher		
Guest book and cards		
Slideshow and music		
Flowers and set-up		
Livestream		
Wake or gathering host		
Looking after children or pets		

ON THE DAY

Running sheet

Your celebrant will usually prepare the final order. Use this page to sketch it out together.

Date

Venue

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	WHO
	Guests arrive	
	Welcome	
	Eulogy	
	Reflection and photos	
	Committal or farewell words	
	Closing music	

The gathering and beyond

The gathering

- [ ] Venue (home, café, hall, park)
- [ ] Food and drinks, or a caterer
- [ ] Their favourite foods or drinks
- [ ] Photos and memorabilia on display
- [ ] Someone to welcome people

Burial or ashes

- [ ] Interment or burial details
- [ ] Collecting the ashes
- [ ] Where ashes will rest or be scattered (check any permissions)
- [ ] A headstone or plaque (often months later)

Thank-yous

- [ ] List of people to thank
- [ ] Cards or messages sent
- [ ] Flowers shared or taken to others
- [ ] Donations acknowledged

Remembering

- [ ] Copies of photos, recording or order of service shared
- [ ] A keepsake (jewellery, cushion, tree, bench)
- [ ] Dates to remember noted (see page 14)
- [ ] A gentle check-in with those who are struggling

Notes

IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOW

Letting people know

Most organisations will need a copy of the death certificate. It can help to order several certified copies.

First

- [ ] Death certificate received, and extra copies ordered
- [ ] Executor of the will contacted
- [ ] Solicitor contacted, if needed

Government

- [ ] Services Australia (Centrelink, Medicare)
- [ ] Australian Taxation Office
- [ ] Australian Electoral Commission
- [ ] Veterans' Affairs, NDIS or My Aged Care, if relevant
- [ ] Passport cancelled at Australia Post
- [ ] Driver's licence and car registration

Australian Death Notification Service

Once you have the death certificate, this free government service lets you notify many banks, super funds and utilities in one online form. Not every organisation takes part, so tick off each one as you go.

- [ ] Banks and credit cards
- [ ] Superannuation
- [ ] Insurance
- [ ] Utilities, phone and internet
- [ ] Council and rates

Everyday things

- [ ] Subscriptions and memberships
- [ ] Email and social media accounts
- [ ] Mail redirection
- [ ] Doctors, dentists and pharmacy
- [ ] Pet registration and vet

Sources: my.gov.au "Death of someone close to you" checklist, and the Australian Death Notification Service. Steps can change, so check current details online.

KEEPING TRACK

Budget

Ask your funeral director for an itemised quote. Prepaid plans, insurance or super may cover some costs.

ITEM	QUOTE	PAID	WHO PAID / NOTES
Funeral director			
Burial or cremation			
Coffin or urn			
Celebrant			
Venue			
Flowers			
Printing (order of service)			
Catering and gathering			
Death notices			
Livestream or AV			
Headstone or plaque			
Total			

Help offered

When someone says "let me know if there's anything I can do", write it here. Then let them.

WHO	WHAT THEY OFFERED	DONE

Ideas to suggest: meals, school pick-ups, walking the dog, phoning people, collecting relatives from the airport, mowing the lawn, sitting with you.

Dates to remember

When you're ready, I'm here.

I'd be honoured to help you plan a farewell that truly sounds like the person, or animal, you love: traditional, non-traditional, or something all your own.

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www.reedsanddragonfly.com

Need support now? Lifeline 13 11 14 (24 hours). In an emergency, call 000.

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