

1. Overview

Death and Dying Matters

These information sheets have been created to demystify some beliefs and misconceptions around dying, death and funerals. They are designed to inform and empower individuals as well as communities, by providing practical information to help make better decisions and more considered choices in relation to end of life matters. This is not anything new, rather a return to a traditional approach, where families and friends are involved at every stage. Choices may be influenced by culture, beliefs, community, finances or sustainability issues.

These sheets may assist you to:

- better understand what is involved in the process of dying, death and bereavement
- participate more fully in any of the stages
- complete the relevant and important legal paperwork
- talk to others about your or their wishes and needs
- clarify your or their instructions around dying and after death
- create a more meaningful funeral to honour and celebrate a life
- have an easier and healthier bereavement

Death is the natural and also a sacred end to our lives. We all know we are going to die, although the time and place are often uncertain. Talking about death is not something we generally find easy to do. Death can come suddenly or slowly, to the young or the old. Generally we will die as we lived; some will be graceful, while others may be fearful, most will be somewhere in between. Death and dying are sometimes referred to as the most significant journey or transition we will make. It is sensible and prudent to be prepared, just like we are in other aspects of our lives.

Although most of us want to get old and die in our own beds, this may not be the case for everyone. Sudden death can come to anyone at any time and it often brings with it great chaos and distress. Embracing this possibility may ease the shock for those left behind; being legally and even a little emotionally prepared may make it easier to bare.

Your own cultural, scientific, religious or spiritual beliefs can help to guide and support you, but sometimes questions may arise. The experience may be debilitating or distressing, healing or liberating, or all of these, it is a personal and different experience for everyone.

Preparation and dialogue are two of the most useful tools in approaching end of life matters. They make dealing with death and dying more manageable for those left behind. If you are preparing for your own death you can state and discuss your wishes in advance, put things in writing, keep your affairs in order, complete relevant documents, and tell your family where your documents are kept. This can be a sometimes challenging experience.

These sheets are not exhaustive, but more a starting point from which you can explore more deeply if you choose. Much of this information may surprise you. It is presented here to help make your experience simpler, easier and more meaningful. Whatever approach you choose to take, we encourage you to prepare, have conversations and participate as much as you want to. Slow things down; there is no hurry. Although you can not change the circumstances of a death, you can create beautiful lasting memories through the preparation and the ceremony.

We encourage honesty throughout the dying, death and funeral process. This includes honesty with children, not leaving them out accidentally or on purpose, and thinking this shelters or protects them.

For situations that involve diverse cultural, religious or ceremonial practices and processes, we encourage contact with relevant organisations and communities.

Information sheets

1. Overview
2. Important documentation
3. Navigating the medical and health care system
4. The dying process
5. Caring for or being with the dying person
6. Sudden, expected and unexpected death
7. Practical care of the body
8. The funeral
9. Bereavement and loss
10. Contacts and resources



Natural Death
Care Centre



The Natural Death Care Centre and Tender Funerals are both not-for-profit organisations based in NSW, committed to informing, educating and empowering individuals, communities, and medical and health professionals. We have a natural, holistic and respectful approach to dying, death, disposal, ceremony and bereavement.

This information sheet was prepared by the Natural Death Care Centre and Tender Funerals, with the support of the Trust Company © July 2013