Funeral Assistance Fact Sheet

What is funeral assistance?
If relatives or friends can’t arrange or pay for the funeral of a loved one who has passed away in Queensland (and the deceased’s assets cannot cover the cost of a funeral), the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, through the Coroners Court of Queensland or a local magistrates court, may organise a simple cremation or burial. This is known as funeral assistance.

Eligibility for funeral assistance
Applications may only be made once a person has passed away. To be eligible to apply, you must:

Ensure that:
- A contract has not been signed for funeral arrangements with a private funeral business;
- No previous applications for assistance have been made for the same deceased person;
- The deceased does not have any superannuation funds, current life or funeral insurance policies

Provide evidence that:
- There are insufficient funds or assets in the deceased’s estate to cover the funeral costs;
- The deceased’s spouse or parents are unable to pay for the funeral.

The deceased person must have lived independent of his or her mother; be of 20 weeks gestation or more and weigh at least 400g.

How to apply
To further assess your eligibility, you will need to attend an interview at your local magistrates court or the Coroners Court of Queensland.

You will need to provide the following information to support your application.

For the applicant:
- Photo identification as you will need to complete a statutory declaration;
- For a spouse or parents of the deceased, documentary proof of your own financial situation such as bank statements (current to the date of the interview). ATM slips are not acceptable as they do not identify the account holder and do not provide evidence of transaction history (BSB and Account number required).

For the deceased:
- Bank statements (current to the date of the interview). ATM slips are not acceptable as they do not identify the account holder and do not provide evidence of transaction history (BSB and Account number required);
- Certified copy of the Will (if one exists);
- Other financial information such as Centrelink details, details of any assets of value such as a vehicle, share certificates, superannuation documents, insurance policies etc.

Once you have the relevant documents, please contact your nearest magistrates court or the Coroners Court of Queensland to attend an interview.

The registrar will advise you of the outcome of your application once they have had the opportunity to consider all of the information provided and make any additional enquiries to determine eligibility.
If your application is approved:

- The department will contact a contracted funeral director in the area where the death occurred to provide the funeral service. The applicant cannot choose the funeral director who will perform the service.
- The deceased will be cremated unless objections are raised by the family, or there is evidence that this is against the wishes of the deceased. Relatives or friends may approach the funeral director to take possession of the ashes after the service, however disposal of the ashes and any associated costs are a matter for the family.
- The location where the deceased will be cremated or buried is determined by the department, usually in the location where the person died.
- For burials, up to four other deceased persons may be buried in the same plot as the deceased. For this reason, plots are unable to be marked by a headstone or plaque.

What services are provided?

The funeral director will:

- provide a properly made, conventionally shaped, stained and suitably lined coffin;
- conduct the funeral in a proper and respectful manner;
- provide a graveside service for burials;
- provide a service at the crematorium for cremations.

If you would like a member of the clergy to conduct a graveside service, the funeral director must be advised. The applicant is responsible for any associated costs.

The funeral director is NOT permitted to provide extra services for additional fees. These include:

- funeral notices in the newspaper;
- viewings;
- church or religious services;
- an upgrade of the coffin;
- flowers;
- headstones or plaques

If an applicant requires these services they will need to arrange a private funeral and elect not to proceed with the application. Family or friends may take their own flowers, however these must not be arranged through the government contracted funeral director.

Can the deceased person be returned to their home town for burial?

The deceased person will be buried or cremated in the place where they died. However, they may be buried at a different location if that place is their ancestral home. In these cases, the family or friends must pay the costs of transporting the deceased to that location.

Can money be recovered from the deceased person’s estate at a later time?

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is entitled to recover monies from the estate, similar to any other debt.

After the funeral service has been performed, if a relative or friend becomes aware of any monies owing to the estate, they must advise the department.

Where do I get more information?

Please contact your nearest magistrates court or the Coroners Court of Queensland. You may also telephone (07) 3738 7067 or email FuneralAssistance@justice.qld.gov.au.

Contact details

This fact sheet has been prepared by the Coroners Court of Queensland. If you have any enquiries or feedback about the fact sheet, please email: state.coroner@justice.qld.gov.au.