



ACT
Government

Chief Minister, Treasury and
Economic Development

**ACT
FUNERAL
ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM
GUIDELINES**

ACT FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

AIM

The aim of the ACT Funeral Assistance Program is to provide:

- A simple dignified respectful funeral;
- An appropriate service for cultural and or religious requirements; and
- A choice of burial/cremation (unless the wishes of the deceased are specified in the Last Will and Testament).

We provide financial assistance for a basic funeral to people in financial hardship.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the ACT Funeral Assistance Program is to engage one or more Contractors to conduct basic funerals and associated services for eligible ACT residents who die in financially disadvantaged circumstances. Clients who find themselves unable to meet the full costs of a funeral for family members may be entitled to financial assistance from the ACT Government. The family can seek this assistance through contracted Funeral Directors. The financial assessment (to be undertaken by contracted Funeral Directors on behalf of the ACT Government) includes an assessment of income, expenditure and assets of the deceased person and their nearest living relatives (applicant) or in special circumstances, friends or associates.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Contractor/s must be a member of the Australian Funeral Directors Association or other appropriate professional body and provide evidence of membership.

The Contractor/s, and all persons employed by the Contractor/s, shall at all times observe and conform to the highest standards of professional conduct when performing this contract which should endeavour to preserve the dignity of the deceased.

The service is to be provided on an 'on call' basis 24 hours, 365 days of the year.

Funerals are to be conducted on weekdays only and at times mutually agreed with the deceased's family. Where culture requires (ie burial within 24 hours), the Contractor must notify the Directorate prior to confirming arrangements, or on the next working day to advise of arrangements if the death occurs on a weekend. Should the Contractor fail to attend to the removal of the deceased within 24 hours of death, another Funeral Director on the Panel of Providers may carry out the removal of the deceased.

ACT FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The service must be accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Cultural requirements and practices for funerals of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be considered.

The Territory is seeking the following services from the Contractor (Funeral Provider).

- **Transportation of deceased person/s.**
The service may include the transport of deceased persons from the place of death (hospital, residence or mortuary) to a funeral parlour and to conduct a basic funeral service. The Contractor is to supply sufficient vehicles needed to be available to handle multiple callouts.
- **Provision of a suitable hearse.**
The Contractor will be required to provide a suitable hearse for the carrying of the deceased to the cemetery/crematorium.
- **Engagement of suitable personnel and booking of venue.**
The Contractor is to consult and engage the Clergy (or Civil Celebrant) of any denomination and book the Church, Crematorium and/or Cemetery. The Contractor is to provide personnel to conduct the funeral and associated services.
- **Payment of Cemetery/cremation fee.**
The Contractor(s) will negotiate costs and work associated with grave preparation and crematorium arrangements. No claim will be allowed under this contract for any burial/cremation for which the Contractor receives or arranges for any payment from the relative or friends of the deceased that is not documented under the contract provisions.
- **Provision of coffin.**
The Funeral Director is to supply a polished particle board with laminated finish coffin or a similarly presented biodegradable coffin (for burial or cremation) with plastic silver handles, plates, thumbscrews and escutcheon. Child coffins will have a painted finish. Plastic lining, side sheets, flannelette frilling and head rest to be supplied and include a plastic silver nameplate bearing the name of the deceased.
- **Registration and associated notifications.**
The Contractor is to liaise with the family to make arrangements for the funeral including the registration of the death with the Registrar of Birth, Deaths and Marriages. The Contractor is required to order the Certified Death Certificate. The Contractor is to arrange for the collection of medical certificates and their dispatch to appropriate authorities. The Contractor must obtain cremation certificates required by Law.

ACT FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

- **Type of Funeral.**

The Contractor is to liaise with the relative and they will be required to choose cremation or burial unless the wishes of the deceased are specified in a Last Will and Testament. A cremation will generally be the preferred method, provided that there is no objection set out in the Will of the Deceased or there is a written agreement of any known friends or relatives. Any instructions made by the Coroner regarding the disposal of the body are to be followed.

A plaque beam may be supplied, when the deceased is buried. If the deceased is to be cremated, where the interment of the ashes is indicated in the deceased's will or specifically requested by the deceased's family, interment of the ashes may be arranged with a plaque in the Wall of Remembrance, Gungahlin Cemetery. Any additional costs for memorialisation must be met by the family or significant others.

At all times cultural requirements are to be considered.

- **Funeral Service**

Where a family has an existing plot in a cemetery, the Contractor may negotiate to meet the family's wishes. The funeral service of the deceased will be a minimum of a service in a chapel or church or at the graveside (which ever is the preference of the family).

- **Advertising**

A basic combined funeral and death notice will be placed in a newspaper. This notice will include the name of the deceased, the date of death and any funeral arrangement. Reimbursement costs for cost for advertising will be based on the going advertising rates but will not exceed \$300 without specific approval from the Directorate, (for example a 10% variation is acceptable to accommodate large families). The Territory will annually review the cost of advertising.

SERVICES NOT INCLUDED

The following services are not provided as part of the Contract with organisations and will be an added cost to the family if requested:

- Funeral services will not be carried out on weekends, except where culturally appropriate;
- Flowers;
- Music/organist;
- Memorial cards and books;
- Mourning cars/limousines; and
- Headstones.

ACT FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

ELIGIBILITY

The Funeral Director is to determine whether the family is eligible for assistance by following guidelines set out by the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD).

The Funeral Director is to conduct the assessment of applicants to verify eligibility against the agreed criteria.

Where a referral is received from the ACT Public Trustee and is deemed by the Public Trustees office to meet the eligibility criteria, an assessment will not need to be conducted by the Funeral Director.

ELIGIBILITY Guidelines:

The aim of the ACT Funeral Assistance Program is to provide financial assistance for a basic funeral, to ACT residents in financial hardship. Each individual will be assessed on a case by case basis and therefore the following criteria are to be used as guidelines only. All criteria are to be applied to both the applicant and the deceased:

- Be on a low income (less than \$32,000 per annum);
- Be a resident of the ACT for a minimum of six (6) months
- Have no assets or investments that can be used as payment or equity for a loan to cover funeral cost;
- Be eligible for a health care card, disability pension, or other form of Centrelink income payment;
- Be living from payment to payment with money being spent on necessities such as rent, food, electricity, loan repayments; and
- Not have savings or other substantial assets (e.g. Superannuation for the deceased) at date of death totalling more than \$2000.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Having conducted a thorough assessment of the deceased and immediate family, if the contracted Funeral Director is satisfied the program eligibility criteria is met, there are no special circumstances and the total costs of the funeral and associated services do not exceed the standard fee, they may conduct the funeral.
- The Funeral Director must keep a copy of all assessments conducted as the Directorate reserves the right to inspect all records in relation to each funeral and associated services in relation to the program.
- Funerals and associated services that may exceed the standard fees for either cremation or burial are to be considered 'special circumstances' and will therefore require prior approval from the Directorate before funeral occurring.

ACT FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

- If the applicant is not a family member then a special circumstances form will be required stating the reason a non-family member is applying and submitted to the Directorate for approval.
- Contracted Funeral Directors will need to submit the assessment form detailing the special circumstances in relation to each funeral prior to the funeral proceeding.
- Where instructions are made by the Coroner regarding the disposal of the body, these instructions are to be followed and do not require an application in regard to special circumstances. Evidence of the Coroner's request must be retained and provided upon invoice request as backing documentation.
- Where a referral is received from the ACT Public Trustee and is deemed by the Public Trustees office to meet the ACT Funeral Assistance Program eligibility criteria for ACT Residents, an assessment of the deceased and immediate family will not need to be conducted by the Funeral Director. Documentation from the Public Trustee must be retained and provided with invoice as backing documentation.
- If the funeral and associated services meet the standard funeral criteria, the contracted Funeral Director may proceed with the funeral and invoice the Directorate with all backing documentation included. All applications must be submitted promptly, if an application is received by the Directorate where the date of the funeral is more than six months prior, the application will be considered void and payment shall not be honoured.
- Approval will need to be sought by the Funeral Director, from the Directorate, where the funeral and associated services meet the special circumstances criteria.

ASSESSMENT

As part of the assessment undertaken by the Funeral Director, the applicant will need to provide:

- Documentary evidence that the deceased has been an ACT resident for a minimum of six (6) months;
- A copy of current Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) as issued by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans Affairs for the applicant and deceased; or a current Health Care Card (HCC) to which the applicant and the deceased has been entitled to for a continuous period in excess of three (3) calendar months;
- Documentation from Centrelink providing details of the amount due to the applicant or the deceased estate;
- Bank statements for all accounts (including loans) in the name of the deceased and the applicant, for the past six (6) months. These

ACT FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

accounts must show that on the date of death that any savings held totalled no more than \$2000;

- Information regarding the value of any real estate, vehicles owned and any household items of value;
- Information in respect to any superannuation or life insurance policies held by the deceased;
- The previous year's financial tax assessment form if the applicant is not in receipt of a Centrelink payment;; and
- Signed declaration that the information provided is true and correct.

Families may make a contribution of up to a maximum \$500 towards the cost of the funeral.

All paperwork provided by the applicant concerning financial status of the deceased and the applicant must be current (no more than one month prior to the death occurring). Any paperwork received dated in excess of one month will not be accepted unless under special circumstances.

Where the proposed funeral exceeds a basic funeral in the ACT, including transfers within the ACT and a standard coffin, the Funeral Director or representative will need to complete the Approval for Special Circumstances form of the ACT Funeral Assistance Program Application Package itemising and detailing the components of the proposed arrangements including all costs (including GST).

CMTEDD reserves the right to decline financial assistance to contracted funeral directors where a review of the financial assessment is deemed lacking in, or providing insufficient evidence of, the financial hardship.

The Approval for Special Circumstances form detailing the special circumstances must be forwarded to CMTEDD for approval prior to the funeral service taking place. Special circumstances may include repatriation of an Indigenous person to their ancestral lands, or other cultural or religious requirements as appropriate.

ALLOCATION OF WORK

The deceased's family, having the choice of a Funeral Provider shall determine the allocation of work. The Public Trustee will also allocate work.

ACT FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

PRICING

The Pricing Schedule is detailed in Attachment 1 of the contract between your organisation and the Directorate. The Pricing Schedule consists of:

1. Funeral Directors Service Fee.

Consisting of:

- Provision of Hearse;
- Cemetery/Cremation Fee;
- Registration and associated notifications;
- Plaque beam or plaque in the wall or remembrance;
- Advertising; and
- Funeral Service.

2. Transportation.

3. Coffins.

4. Minister of Religion/Civil Celebrant fees.

INVOICING

The contractor is required to comply with the accounting and auditing requirements of the Territory. The Contractor will be required to provide detailed accounts of all costs associated with each funeral/cremation arranged (including the part of the account being met by the family). Only one Funeral Provider can invoice services for one cremation or burial.

Invoice must be accompanied by the completed ACT Funeral Assistance Program Application Package.

OTHER INFORMATION

Any other questions or information can be obtained by referring to the contract or by contacting the ACT Funeral Assistance Program, Program Manager.

PHONE: 02 6207 0028

EMAIL: concessions@act.gov.au