



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Guidelines for the preparation of the deceased for burial or cremation

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Definitions

body means the body of a dead person, but does not include the cremated remains of the person.

body preparation room means that part of a mortuary that is used for the preparation of bodies for burial or cremation.

burial includes putting in a vault.

dead person includes a still-born child.

embalming means the process of preserving a body by means of the removal of body fluids and arterially injecting the body with embalming fluids

funeral director means a person (other than the operator of a mortuary transport service) who, in the conduct of the person's business, engages, for the purpose of burial, cremation or transport, in the collection, transport, storage, preparation or embalming of bodies or engages in the conduct of exhumations

holding room means a room that includes refrigerated body storage facilities for at least 2 adult bodies but does not include a body preparation room.

mortuary means premises that are used, or intended to be used, for the preparation or storage of bodies as part of the arrangements for their burial or cremation, but does not include any premises (such as a hospital) in which bodies may be temporarily stored pending their transfer to a mortuary.

mortuary transport service means a service that, for fee, gain or reward, transports bodies

refrigerated body storage facility means a storage facility for bodies maintained at between 1 and 5 degrees Celsius.

Legislation

These requirements are to be read in conjunction with:

- *Public Health Act 2016* and *Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1911*
- *Health (Skin Penetration Procedure) Regulations 1998* and the Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Skin-penetration-procedures-and-the-law
- Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (section B1) published by the National Health and Medical Research Council <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-prevention-and-control-infection-healthcare-2010>

Introduction

The Funeral Industry is largely regulated by Local Government but the *Public Health Act 2016* and *Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1911* provide important legislation intended to ensure that Public Health principles are applied to the practice of preparing the deceased for

burial or cremation. The 'Guidelines for the preparation of the deceased for burial and cremation' (the Guidelines) have been developed to set out the minimum requirements that are expected of the Funeral Industry.

The Guidelines do not replace other official guidelines provided for the Funeral Industry but should be read in conjunction with them.

The Guidelines, which were prepared by the Public Health Division of the Department of Health (DOH) Western Australia (WA) in conjunction with the Funeral Industry, are published by the Deputy Chief Health Officer.

Facilities

All premises to be used to receive and store bodies of the dead must be licensed and the responsibility for licensing rests with Local Government.

Retention of bodies by a person who is not a funeral director

- A person who is not a Funeral Director must not retain a body if more than 5 days have elapsed since death.
- The Chief Health Officer (CHO) may approve, in a particular case, of a body being retained for longer than 5 days, subject to any conditions that the CHO considers appropriate.
- If human remains are to be placed into storage, the person responsible for that storage must first place the human remains in a coffin, container or tray capable of –
 - Ensuring that the escape of bodily discharges, contaminants or infectious materials is prevented or confined to that coffin, container or tray; and
 - Protecting any person who comes into contact with the coffin, container or tray from bodily discharges, contaminants or infectious materials
- A person responsible for the storage of human remains must ensure that the human remains, or the storage facility in which the human remains are placed, is brought to and maintained at a temperature not exceeding 5 degrees Celsius as soon as practicable after the custody of the human remains becomes that person's responsibility.
- The maximum time permitted for unembalmed human remains to be stored without refrigeration is 24 hours.
- This clause does not apply to a body that is stored at premises licensed under the *Anatomy Act 1930* or is the subject of the *Coroners Act 1996*.

Retention of bodies by a funeral director

- A funeral director must retain a body:
 - in a refrigerated body storage facility, and
 - in a mortuary or holding room.
- A funeral director may cause the body to be removed from a refrigerated body storage facility:
 - to another part of the mortuary, for a maximum of 8 hours a day for the purposes of preparing the body for burial or cremation, embalming the body or viewing of the body by mourners, or
 - for the purpose of transporting the body for burial, interment or cremation, or
 - for the purpose of transporting the body to another mortuary.
- If a full embalming of the deceased has occurred, removal from refrigerated storage for the purposes of funeral rites for up to three days (72 hours) may be considered. In these

cases the funeral director and family of the deceased must work in conjunction to ensure appropriate environmental management and respectful placement of the deceased.

Embalming of bodies

- A person must not embalm a body unless that person has a current certificate of proficiency recognised by the Australian Institute of Embalming; or is undergoing training or mentoring towards achieving this qualification.
- A person must, when carrying out a skin penetration procedure, comply with the *Health (Skin Penetration Procedure) Regulations 1998* and the Code of Practice for Skin Penetration Procedures.

Infection control procedures

- A person must, when carrying out any procedure on a body, comply with the guidelines specified in the Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (section B1) published by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

Bodies to be placed in body bags or wrapping

- A responsible person must ensure that the body of a dead person is not removed from a place unless:
 - the body has been placed and secured in a bag or wrapping in a manner that prevents the leakage of any body exudate or other substance, and
 - the name of, or an identification of, the dead person is clearly and indelibly written on a wristband.
- For the purposes of this clause, a responsible person means:
 - if the body is at a hospital – the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), or a person authorised by the CEO, or
 - if the body is at any other premises or place – the funeral director or the person removing the body.

Removal of bodies from body bags or wrapping

- A funeral director may only remove a body from a body bag, or wrapping, if the removal is for the purpose of
 - embalming the body, or
 - preparing the body for viewing, transport, burial or cremation, or
 - transferring the body to a coffin.
- After a funeral director has completed a temporary embalming procedure, or otherwise prepared a body, the funeral director must place it in a new body bag or wrapping.
- After a funeral director has completed a full embalming, body bags are not recommended.
 - If the embalming is for repatriation the body should be placed in a wrap inside the coffin, and the coffin should be placed in an outer covering for transportation.
- This clause does not apply to a body that is subject of an inquest under the *Coroners Act 1996* or a post mortem that is carried out under the *Human Tissue and Transplant Act 1982*.

Body viewing

- A funeral director may make a body available for viewing by mourners.

- A funeral director who makes an unembalmed body available for viewing:
 - must not remove the body from refrigeration for a period longer than is necessary for making it available for viewing, and
 - unless the body is to be buried or cremated immediately, must place the body under refrigeration after the viewing, and
 - must not allow the body to remain unrefrigerated for a period of more than 8 hours in any day.

Register of bodies

- A person who operates a mortuary must maintain a register of all bodies stored and prepared in such mortuaries.
- The person must make an entry in the register relating to each body immediately after the body is prepared.
- Each entry must include the following:
 - the name, age and last address of the person whose body was prepared
 - the date of the person's death
 - the date the body was received
 - the date the body was removed from the mortuary, and
 - the name of the cemetery or crematorium, or the person, to whom the body was delivered.
- The person must keep a copy of the register and make it available for inspection.

Transport of bodies

- A funeral director must, before despatching a body by a carrier other than a funeral director or the operator of a mortuary transport service, enclose the body in a watertight coffin.



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