



# **Bereavement information for New Zealand citizens (Australia)**

If you are in Australia and need consular assistance call:

<b>ACT/WA/TAS/NT/SA</b>	<b>- 02 6270 4211</b>
<b>NSW/QLD</b>	<b>- 02 9270 5900</b>
<b>VIC</b>	<b>- 03 9678 0201</b>

If you are in New Zealand and are calling about someone in  
Australia call:

**+ 64 4 439 8000**

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has endeavoured to provide the most up-to-date accurate information in this booklet. However, you should seek specialist advice and take care to ensure that any decisions you make are based on current information from New Zealand and Australia.*

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New Zealand High Commission Canberra, we would like to offer our deepest condolences on the passing of your family member or friend. The information in this booklet is intended to answer many of the questions you may have, and outline how consular can assist you at this difficult time. If you have any additional questions, you can call the numbers on the front of this booklet during office hours.

### **How we can help**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Safetravel website outlines how we can help: [www.safetravel.govt.nz/death](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/death)

- We can advise on the process followed by the local authorities before the deceased's body is released to the next of kin.
- We can offer general information about the options that are available locally, such as burial or cremation and give you information about repatriation to New Zealand.
- We can provide contact details for local funeral directors who can manage the funeral or repatriation arrangements in consultation with you.
- We can provide you with contact details for the local police or other authorities should you wish to speak to them directly regarding your loved one's death.
- We can give you contact details for organisations that can offer bereavement counselling and support.
- We can ensure the deceased's passport is cancelled to avoid identity theft.
- We can issue certified true copies of a document (fees charged).

We are not able to speed up any official processes that may occur following a death, such as a coroner's inquest. In addition, we cannot help with any costs associated with the death of a New Zealand citizen overseas, including funeral/cremation costs, repatriation of the deceased's body to New Zealand, or the return of personal effects. Travel insurance may contribute or cover these costs and in some circumstances a funeral grant may be available from Work and Income New Zealand. If the death was as a result of injury and the deceased had been in Australia for less than 6 months, the family may also be entitled to a grant or payment from ACC to assist with the costs.

### **Next of kin**

If the deceased New Zealand citizen is not accompanied by their next of kin or a close family member while in Australia, in the event of a death the Australian authorities will generally contact the New Zealand High Commission Canberra or Consulates in Australia to assist in locating the next of kin. We do this through Interpol, who then arrange for the family in New Zealand to be notified of the death by the New Zealand police. If they wish, the family can call consular at MFAT in Wellington, the High Commission in Canberra, or our Consulates in Sydney or Melbourne, for information on how to make arrangements.

In Australia, sometimes there can be more than one person consider next of kin, for example separated or divorced parents may both be considered next of kin if their shared son or daughter passes away. Next of kin is generally the determined in the following order:

- Spouse/Partner/Civil Partner
- Adult child (over 18 years old)
- Parent
- Adult sibling (over 18 years old)
- An adult with a sufficient relationship to the deceased

It is not normally necessary for the deceased person to be formally identified by the next of kin in Australia. Documents such as a passport or driving licence can be used for identification, or alternatively, fingerprints, DNA, or dental records.

### **Appointing a funeral director and repatriation**

If the deceased was insured and/or had travel insurance, we advise you to contact the insurance company as soon as possible to establish if the insurance will cover the associated costs. If the insurance does cover these costs, they will appoint a funeral director both in New Zealand and Australia (if you intend for the deceased to be repatriated to New Zealand) – we strongly advise against appointing your own funeral director until you have spoken to the insurance company. If there is no insurance cover, the costs will need to be met by the family, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New Zealand Government, the High Commission, and Consulates in Australia (or elsewhere) are unable to assist financially. Repatriating a body can be expensive, sometimes in excess of \$10,000 AUS, depending on the location of death, so many people choose cremation as repatriating ashes costs considerably less. Whether to repatriate the deceased, and how to do so, is personal choice but it is often worth getting several quotes as funeral director costs can vary.

The Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand (FDANZ) can assist you in locating an international funeral director close to where you live in New Zealand if you intend to repatriate the body or ashes. Usually, the funeral director will liaise with their counterparts in Australia so arrangements can be co-ordinated between them and ensure the deceased is returned home as quickly as possible. International funeral directors are generally familiar with the requirements around repatriation and will be able to explain the process to you.

If you wish to have a cremation in Australia and return the ashes to New Zealand yourself, you can visit the Funerals Australia website which has a directory to help you find a funeral director by location. When bringing ashes into New Zealand, we suggest you check with your airline for any specific requirements and NZ Customs (see useful websites).

### **Posting Ashes to New Zealand**

New Zealand Post will not allow ashes to be sent through the New Zealand postal system. If you need to send ashes back to New Zealand, we suggest discussing it with your funeral director as they may be able to assist. However, the easiest way is to take ashes with you as carry-on or checked in luggage. You should check the airline websites for information on their requirements.

### **Post-Mortem/Autopsy**

In Australia, a Post-mortem is usual when a death is not through natural causes but could also be requested by a hospital if the cause of death is unclear. It is possible for the next of kin to object, or request an external or partial post-mortem instead, but this could lead to limited information on a death certificate which in turn could cause issues with travel insurance and settlement of the estate. Generally, if the coroner's office thinks it is necessary, they will contact the next of kin beforehand to explain why they feel a post-mortem should be carried out. In some cases, such as homicide, a post-mortem will go ahead unquestionably. Death by homicide, accident, suicide, or deaths that have occurred in care or prison, or have unknown causes, will generally be investigated by the coroner; this may lead to an inquest. While an inquest is ongoing, information provided by the coroner or police about the death will be limited, and the next of kin, MFAT, or the High Commission will not be given any information until the preliminary investigation is concluded. This can take several months or more, and we are unable to influence the speed of this process.

### **Local death certificate**

The death will be registered locally by the funeral director with the relevant state authority, and an Australian death certificate will be issued. The funeral director may need to obtain background information about the deceased from you, such as full name, date of birth, address, place of birth, occupation, marital status, and parents' names and occupations. The certificate will accompany the body or ashes back to New Zealand if the deceased is being repatriated, but it can be a good idea for the next of kin to hold a certified true copy of the certificate to assist with organising the deceased's affairs – ask the funeral director to provide a copy or advise you how to go about obtaining one, or contact us for assistance.

### **New Zealand Māori**

Australian authorities will generally respect the beliefs and traditions of Māori culture when dealing with deceased relatives. With respect to post-mortem procedures circumstances surrounding the death may determine a post-mortem is necessary, and even compulsory. When a post-mortem is necessary, due to the volume of cases many Coroners offices deal with, the release of the body can sometimes take a week or more. In such cases clear communication with family members is important. In addition, repatriation of the body back to

New Zealand can often take longer if the death occurred in a regional area, due to transportation logistics.

Many funeral directors in Australia have experience with Māori tangihanga and it is suggested you specifically ask them about this when engaging their services. Recommendations from other people can be an excellent way to locate an experienced funeral director, or you can contact the Australian Funeral Directors Association and ask for a recommendation from them. If you are in New Zealand and intend to repatriate your loved one's body, your local funeral director will locate an Australian counterpart to assist.

### **Passport cancellation**

It is advisable to ensure the deceased person's passport is cancelled to avoid identity theft. You can contact the Passport Office in Sydney, the High Commission Canberra, or Consulates in Sydney or Melbourne directly to arrange this.

### **Driving Licence cancellation**

To cancel the New Zealand driving licence of a deceased family member, call the NZ Transport Agency on Tel: 0800 822 422.

### **Wills and estates**

The New Zealand Citizens Advice Bureau has general information on the administering of the estate of a deceased New Zealander, including when someone dies abroad – see the link in the useful websites section. It is also advisable to seek legal advice.

### **Grief support**

Losing a loved one is difficult, but if the loss occurs overseas there can be added stress, and while for many people the support of friends and family is enough, others find it helpful to seek out the support of organisations like Grief Support. Please see useful websites.

### **Additional information**

When a New Zealander dies overseas as a result of an injury, the family may be entitled to a grant or payment from ACC to assist with costs. ACC cover extends to New Zealand residents taking short trips overseas.

## **Useful websites**

- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade website**  
<https://safetravel.govt.nz/death>
- **The Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand (FDANZ)**  
[www.fdanz.co.nz/death-while-overseas](http://www.fdanz.co.nz/death-while-overseas)
- **Funerals Australia**  
[www.funeralsaustralia.org.au](http://www.funeralsaustralia.org.au)
- **Work and Income New Zealand**  
[www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/funeral-grant](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/funeral-grant)
- **New Zealand Citizens Advice Bureau**  
<http://www.cab.org.nz/vat/fp/d/Pages/Probate.aspx#8>
- **Grief Support (If you're in New Zealand)**  
<http://www.griefsupport.org.nz>
- **Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement (if you're in Australia)**  
[www.grief.org.au](http://www.grief.org.au)
- **ACC**  
[www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz)
- **NZ Transport Agency**  
<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/renewing-replacing-and-updating/licence-holder-has-passed-away/>
- **New Zealand Government**  
<https://www.govt.nz/browse/family-and-whanau/death-and-bereavement/what-you-need-to-do-when-someone-dies/>
- **Importing Ashes into New Zealand**  
[www.customs.govt.nz/personal/prohibited-and-restricted-items](http://www.customs.govt.nz/personal/prohibited-and-restricted-items)
- **Australia Post**  
<https://auspost.com.au/help-and-support>
- **NZ Post**  
<https://www.nzpost.co.nz/contact-support>
- **New Zealand Passport Office in Australia (DIA)**  
[In Australia | New Zealand Passports](#)