

Obtaining a death certificate

The coroner provides the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages with information about the cause of death so the death can be registered and a death certificate issued.

Standard death certificate

You or your funeral director can order a standard death certificate. The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) will issue the death certificate to the person who arranged the funeral, however you can apply directly to BDM for a copy of the death certificate if you were not the release applicant making the funeral arrangements.

Interim death certificate

In matters where the coroner has not yet established the cause of a death, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages can issue an interim death certificate. However, as an interim death certificate does not specify the cause of the death, it may not be accepted for all official purposes. Staff from the Coroners Court of Victoria and CA&E may also provide a Confirmation of Death letter confirming that a death has occurred. This letter is not accepted by all financial and or legal institutions for official purposes. It is always best to check with the organisation you are dealing with as to whether they will accept an interim death certificate.

Help in a difficult time

Staff from the Coroners Court of Victoria and the CA&E can assist families by providing referral information for agencies who may assist with your grief and loss. Please refer to the back page of this brochure for a list of helpful contact numbers for agencies who offer a range of support services for people during this difficult time.

Helpful contact numbers

(BUSINESS HOURS UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED)

Australian Centre for Grief & Bereavement	(03) 9265 2100
Compassionate Friends Victoria	1300 064 068 (24 hours)
Coronial Admissions and Enquiries	1300 309 519
Donor Tissue Bank of Victoria	(03) 9684 4444
Federation of Community Legal Centres	(03) 9652 1500
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800 (24 hours)
Law Institute of Victoria	(03) 9607 9550
Lifeline	13 11 14 (24 hours)
Mensline	1300 789 978
Mercy Grief Services	(03) 9313 5700
National Relay Service - TTY Service	13 36 77
- Speak & Listen	1300 555 727
Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages	1300 369 367
Road Trauma Support Team	1300 367 797
SIDS and Kids Victoria	1300 308 307 (24 hours)
State Trustees	(03) 9667 6444
- Country Victoria	1300 138 672
Suicide Helpline	1300 651 251 (24 hours)
Support After Suicide	(03) 9421 7640
Translating & Interpreter Service	13 14 50
Transport Accident Commission	1300 654 329
Victims of Crime Helpline	1800 819 817
Victoria Legal Aid	(03) 9269 0234
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services	1800 064 865
Victorian Court Information & Welfare Network – court process support	1800 681 614

Coroners Court of Victoria

65 Kavanagh Street Southbank 3006
T - 1300 309 519 F - 1300 546 989
www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au



Coroners Court of Victoria

*What do I
do now?*



Coroners Court
of Victoria



VICTORIAN INSTITUTE
OF FORENSIC MEDICINE

The first steps in the coronial process

This short brochure explains the things you need to know immediately after the death of a loved one is reported to the coroner.

For further information contact Coronial Admissions and Enquiries (CA&E) on 1300 309 519 or visit the Coroners Court of Victoria website at www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

The role of the coroner

The coroner investigates certain deaths and fires to find out their cause. They do not investigate all deaths, only deaths which are reportable, which include:

- those that are unexpected, unnatural or violent or arise from accident or injury
- those that happen unexpectedly during or following a medical procedure
- those that happen when the person who died was in 'custody or care'
- when a doctor is not able to sign a death certificate
- when the identity of the person is not known

Initial contact

CA&E staff will get in touch with you about the first steps of the coronial process.

The CA&E is a state-wide 24-hour service provided by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine. The role of the CA&E is to:

- receive reports of deaths
- admit people into the care of the coronial jurisdiction
- release people from the care of the coronial jurisdiction for the funeral service
- coordinate the identification process
- coordinate the medical investigation into a death on behalf of the coroner.

Admission into care

In most cases, if your loved one died in Melbourne, he or she will be taken into the care of the CA&E at the State Coronial Services Centre at 65 Kavanagh Street, Southbank.

If your loved one died in regional Victoria, CA&E staff will get in touch with you and tell you where he or she is being cared for. CA&E staff will assist you if you wish to see or spend time with your loved one and will talk to you about who will be the 'senior next of kin'. The 'senior next of kin' is determined by the coroner and any ongoing communication about the coronial investigation will be made through that person or their nominated representative.

Identification

The coroner must confirm the identity of the person who has died. This may involve a visual or medical and scientific process.

In circumstances where a visual identification is required, you may be asked to identify your loved one. To identify a loved one you must be a family member or someone who knew the person well at the time of their death. Medical or scientific methods of identification may include the use of dental records, fingerprinting or DNA comparisons.

The coroner will determine the most appropriate method of identification and CA&E staff will inform you of the identification process that will be required for your loved one.

Medical examinations

Medical examinations are carried out to help the coroner determine the cause of a person's death. Even if it seems obvious, it is very important that the coroner is able to investigate exactly what happened.

Preliminary examination

Once your loved one is in the care of the coronial jurisdiction, a pathologist will examine him or her. This preliminary examination is minimally invasive. CA&E staff work closely with pathologists and will answer any questions you may have.

CA&E staff may also ask you for information to help obtain your loved one's medical records or other information and they may need to talk to you about the circumstances surrounding the death. The police may also contact you to discuss the death. They help the coroner gather as many facts surrounding the death as possible.

Autopsy

In some cases, an autopsy will need to be performed. This is a medical procedure performed by a pathologist that aims to determine the medical cause of the death. If a coroner believes that an autopsy is necessary, CA&E staff will contact the 'senior next of kin' first to explain the process and answer any questions.

If you intend to object to an autopsy occurring, for example because of religious, cultural or other reasons, please let CA&E staff know at this time so that they can inform the coroner. The coroner will take your concerns into account and CA&E staff will contact you again to let you know their decision. For further information about medical examinations contact 1300 309 519 and ask to speak to a CA&E staff member.

Personal possessions

Personal possessions – such as jewellery, clothing and other valuables – are generally retained by the police at the place of death and then returned. Occasionally, the police may keep some items for forensic examination.

Otherwise all personal items are given to the funeral director to be returned. If you have questions about personal possession please let the CA&E know.

Planning the funeral

You can make contact with a funeral direction at any time. The funeral director will liaise with you and the CA&E staff and help you plan the funeral.

If your loved one died in regional Victoria, the CA&E will arrange for our contracted provider, St John Ambulance (Victoria) to have your loved one repatriated to your chosen funeral home in regional Victoria.