

# Managing our funeral services in the current Covid-19 environment

## UPDATE

New Zealand is now at level four of the Covid-19 Alert Scale. This means that, in line with Ministry of Health requirements, viewing opportunities will be limited and funeral services or tangihanga will NOT be able to take place while we are at Level 4.

## FUNERAL SERVICES

At Rowley's we believe in the value to the community of holding a funeral and deeply understand that not being able to have one will be very distressing. Ideally, a funeral takes place shortly following a death with the bereaved community gathering to mourn as one, and for generations this has been the case. Sadly, for now, this cannot be done in the ways we are used to, but we do have several options.

1. Burials and cremations can be delayed until the alert level has reduced. We can embalm your loved one now and keep them in our care until a funeral can be held. We will work with you during the lockdown period to plan the funeral for a later date. This is our recommended way to move forward.
2. Alternatively, we can help you arrange a delayed memorial service. This means a burial or cremation can take place in the days following death and we will work with you to plan the memorial service for a later date. We will do everything we usually do in guiding you through your options and, when we are able to set a date, will ensure you still remember and mourn appropriately with your community.
3. We can discuss how a virtual funeral might be held now.
4. We can assist you with direct cremation now and you can make decisions later about what sort of service, if any, you want to hold.

## OUR PROCESS

We take the health and wellbeing of our client families and our staff very seriously. With the current Level 4 measures taking place to reduce the spread of Covid-19, below are the processes we are implementing to support our community and staff.

## **First Call**

When someone dies and you make that first call to us we will explain the next steps, including any changes because of the current lockdown environment. We are likely to ask you about whether anyone associated with the death has any COVID-19 connection. We will also help you with information about how we will transfer your loved one into our care, viewing possibilities (mostly online), the funeral arrangement and funeral options.

## **Transfer**

We will carefully explain to you what is going to happen. When we arrive, our staff will wear personal protection equipment (PPE) such as gloves, gown and facemask in order to protect themselves and others. In line with the Ministry of Health guidelines we will maintain physical distance from you and request that you are not present in the room when we move your loved one.

## **Funeral Arrangement**

At alert level four, in order to protect the families, we assist and our staff we will conduct all arrangements remotely using technology (phone, email, facetime, Skype, Zoom etc). Again, we will take our time to explain things and work with you to address the challenges this new environment presents.

## **Viewing**

There are currently strict guidelines from the Ministry of Health around physical viewing of the deceased. In essence, the rule do not allow for any viewing once the deceased has been transferred from the place of death. Some cultural practices may be able to take place, but where possible this will happen virtually. We can also explain how virtual viewings can be made available for family members unable to attend in person.

## **Funeral**

As one of the benefits of a funeral is bringing people together, we recommend you consider waiting to hold a service until the alert level is reduced. If you wish to proceed with something now, we can assist with a virtual service and would be happy to talk through possibilities with you during your first call or arrangement.

## **Burial**

Burials can still take place however the under the Ministry of Health guidelines, only funeral home staff are able to attend. If you wish to have a burial now, we will guide you through how this can be done. If you are unable to attend the

burial, our funeral director can read words of committal at the graveside on your behalf if appropriate.

## QUESTIONS

There is little doubt that these are unprecedented times for our community. We are committed to providing families with great service in the weeks and months ahead and we hope this will bring some comfort to you in these strange times. Giving families permission to farewell their loved ones, although potentially in a different way, is an important service we will provide. Please understand that there may be some changes to our usual practices as the situation changes. If you have any questions or would like to discuss how the situation might affect your specific funeral, please contact our office so we can assist further.

Please take care and look out for each other so we can minimise the risks to you and your family.

If you or your family have immediate concerns relating to Covid-19, please visit the Ministry website [here](#) or call the dedicated Covid-19 Healthline on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453).

Thank you

Rowley Funerals