

Coronial Counselling and Information Service

The Coroner's Court of Western Australia (Coroner's Court) offers a service that assists with providing information about the coronial process.

Staff in the Coronial Counselling and Information Service can assist with:

- Helping you understand the role of the Coroner;
- Explaining the coronial process, including what happens when you object to an internal post mortem examination; and
- Referrals to services for grief and loss counselling.

Please call the Coroner's Court during office hours and ask to speak with a Coronial Counselling and Information Officer.

Senior next of kin

As part of the coronial process, the senior next of kin has certain rights. The senior next of kin is the first person who is available (contactable within a short period of time) from the following persons in the order of priority listed:

- a person who, immediately before the death, was living with the deceased person and was either;
 - legally married to the deceased person; or
 - aged 18 years or over and in a marriage-like relationship with the deceased person;or
- a person who, immediately before death, was legally married to the deceased person; or
- a son or daughter of the deceased person, who is 18 years or over; or
- a parent of the deceased person; or
- a brother or sister of the deceased person, who is 18 years or over; or
- an executor named in the will of the deceased person or a person who, immediately before the death, was a personal representative of the deceased person; or
- any person nominated by the deceased person to be contacted in an emergency.

CONTACT

Coroner's Court of Western Australia

Department of Justice
Central Law Courts
Level 10, 501 Hay Street
PERTH WA 6000

Office hours	8:30am – 4:30pm Monday – Friday
Phone	(08) 9425 2900
Fax	(08) 9425 2901
Country callers	1800 671 994
Website	www.coronerscourt.wa.gov.au
Email	coroner@justice.wa.gov.au

Western Australia Police Force

Coronial Investigation Squad

Phone (08) 9267 5700
Available 24 hours, 7 days per week

SUPPORT SERVICES

Lifeline

Website www.lifeline.org.au
Phone 13 11 14

Griefline

Website <https://griefline.org.au>
Phone 1300 845 745

Trauma and Grief Network

Website <http://tgn.anu.edu.au/reso>

Services Australia

Website www.servicesaustralia.gov.au



Government of Western Australia
Department of Justice

When a Person Dies Suddenly

Information for families

Who is the Coroner?

The Coroner is a judicial officer who must be informed when a reportable death occurs. This includes when a person dies in circumstances which are unexpected, unnatural, violent or resulting from injury, or when the person was held in care.

Once a report of death is received, usually from police, doctors or hospital authorities, the Coroner has legal control over the body of the deceased person, and must establish:

- The circumstances surrounding the death;
- How the death occurred;
- The cause of death;
- The particulars needed to register the death.

Can I see the deceased?

Any of the deceased person's next of kin may view the body. Arrangements will be made for the deceased person to be taken to a mortuary where they may be viewed.

The body may be touched unless the Coroner determines it is undesirable or dangerous.

In Perth, arrangements can be made by contacting the State Mortuary on (08) 6383 4884.

In country areas, contact the local police station or the Coroner's Court on (08) 9425 2900.

Should I contact a funeral director?

You may contact a funeral director of your choice as soon as the deceased person has died, without waiting for the Coroner to release the body.

Your funeral director will contact the Coroner's Court on your behalf to arrange the earliest possible release and funeral date. As soon as the post mortem examination (if applicable) and identification has been completed, the deceased person's body will be released to your funeral director.

What is a post mortem examination?

A post mortem is the method for determining (if possible) and recording the cause of death.

It involves an external and/or internal examination of the deceased person. Some tissue and blood samples are usually retained for laboratory analysis.

After the post mortem, care is taken to return the body as close as possible to its original condition.

In most cases, the body is released for burial or cremation immediately after the examination.

In some cases, it may be necessary for organs to be retained for further examination. This may need to be taken into account when deciding on a funeral date.

Information regarding organ retention following the post mortem is available from the Coronial Counselling and Information Service.

The senior next of kin* may request that a doctor of their choice be present at the examination.

What are my rights?

(a) To object to an internal post mortem examination.

Unless the Coroner decides that a post mortem examination must be held immediately, the senior next of kin* may object to an internal post mortem examination.

(b) To apply for an internal post mortem examination.

In some cases the Coroner may form the view that an internal post mortem examination will not be required. If the Coroner has jurisdiction, any person may ask for an internal post mortem examination to be conducted on the body.

When should I object or apply?

An objection to, or an application for, an internal post mortem examination should be lodged as soon as possible.

Objections to an internal post mortem examination will be considered by the Coroner at any time prior to the examination commencing.

Applications to have an internal post mortem examination will be considered by the Coroner at any time prior to the body being released.

The shortest time for commencing a post mortem examination depends on a number of practical factors including the place of death and the day of the week when this brochure was served.

Internal examinations for deaths in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions may not commence until 72 hours after service of the brochure to allow for contact with the senior next of kin and remote travel.

In other country regions and the Perth metropolitan area the time will be shorter, but in every case a period of at least 24 hours will be allowed to enable objections to be made and post mortem examinations will not be conducted on weekends or public holidays.

To make an objection to or application for an internal post mortem examination, phone the Coroner's Court on (08) 9425 2900 during office hours or the Western Australia Police Force Coronial Investigation Squad after hours on (08) 9267 5700.

Before deciding to object to an internal post mortem examination, it is important to consider whether there are any concerns about the circumstances of the death.

If you wish to object to an internal post mortem examination, do not set a date for the funeral, as the objection process may take some time.

Coroner's report

The Coroner will write to the senior next of kin and any next of kin with the results of the post mortem examination.

The senior next of kin and any next of kin will also be advised of the outcome of the Coroner's investigation.

Organ and tissue donation

The senior next of kin may give consent for organ and tissue donation, if the deceased person did not indicate a wish not to be a donor.

You may be contacted by a donor coordinator from DonateLife WA to discuss the possibility of organ and tissue donation. Please let police or coronial staff know if you do not wish to be contacted by a donor coordinator.

If you wish to discuss organ and tissue donation you can contact the on-call donor coordinator at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital on (08) 6457 3333 (24 hours, 7 days per week).

**definition on reverse of brochure.*