



## NEED ASSISTANCE?

### Coronial counselling services

The Coroner's Office has a free counselling service available for families and friends of a deceased person.

Counsellors can help with:

- explaining what happens when you object to a post-mortem examination
- understanding what the Coroner does
- making arrangements to see the deceased person
- counselling on issues of trauma and loss.

A duty counsellor is available daily between 7am-6pm. During business hours call 9425 2900.

Country callers call 1800 671 994.

On weekends and public holidays call 0419 904 476.

### Senior next of kin

The senior next of kin is the first person who is available, from the following people:

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

## CONTACT

### Post

**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

### Coroner's Office

**Phone** (08) 9425 2900  
**Fax** (08) 9425 2901  
**Country callers** 1800 671 994  
**Website** [www.coronerscourt.wa.gov.au](http://www.coronerscourt.wa.gov.au)

### After hours

**WA Police**  
**Coronial Investigation Squad**  
**Phone (all hours)** (08) 9267 5700

### Victims of Crime

**Website** [www.victimsofcrime.wa.gov.au](http://www.victimsofcrime.wa.gov.au)

### Department of Justice

**Phone** 13 67 57  
**Website** [www.justice.wa.gov.au](http://www.justice.wa.gov.au)

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Court and Tribunal Services Division

# When A Person Dies Suddenly

Information for families

## Who is the Coroner?

The Coroner is a judicial officer who must be advised when a person dies apparently from unnatural causes or where the cause of death is not known.

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?

Yes, arrangements will be made for the deceased person to be taken to a mortuary where they may be viewed by the next of kin.

The body may be touched unless the Coroner directs otherwise.

In Perth, arrangements can be made by contacting the State Mortuary on 6383 4884 or after hours on 6457 2536.

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

## Should I contact a funeral director?

Yes, your funeral director will contact the Coroner's Office on your behalf to arrange the earliest possible funeral date. The choice of funeral director is **yours**.

## What is a post mortem examination?

A post mortem examination is the only certain method of determining and recording the cause of death.

It involves an external and internal examination of the deceased. 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 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. 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 responded to at any time prior to the examination commencing.

Applications to have an internal post mortem examination will be responded to 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.

As a guide, for deaths in the Kimberley and Pilbara internal examinations may not commence for 72 hours after service of the brochure.

*\*definition on reverse of brochure.*

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 or application, phone the Coroner's Office on 9425 2900 during office hours or the WA Police Coronial Investigation Unit after hours on 9267 5700.

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

If a post mortem examination is not held, vital information may be lost.

If you wish to object to a 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 next of kin with the results of the post mortem examination.

The family 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 Donate Life 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 donor coordinator on 6457 3333.