



Northern Sydney
Local Health District



When a relative or friend dies in hospital

This brochure aims to provide information you may find helpful when a relative or a friend dies in hospital.

Please contact the Social Work Department, Monday to Friday, in business hours if you require further information.

Royal North Shore Hospital:	(02) 9462 9477
Ryde Hospital:	(02) 9858 7680
Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital:	(02) 9763 3555
Mona Vale Hospital:	(02) 9998 6300



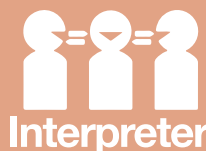
Contents

Immediately after someone dies	3
Personal belongings.....	3
Organising a funeral.....	4
Pre-arranged funerals.....	4
Death certificate	4
Paying for a funeral.....	5
Legal matters.....	6
Deaths reported to the coroner.....	7
Who to notify	7
About grief.....	7
Supporting yourself whilst grieving.....	9
Free 24/7 telephone support numbers.....	10
Support services and websites.....	11
Glossary	12

Interpreters available

The Northern Sydney Local Health District provides a professional healthcare interpreting service for patients, carers and family members who are not fluent in English, including people who have a hearing impairment.

If you require a face to face or telephone interpreter, please ask any of the hospital staff.



Immediately after someone dies

At the time of death family and friends may wish to spend some time with the person who has died. Whenever possible, the staff will try and organise this for family and friends. This may occur on the ward or in the hospital mortuary depending on the hospital. For family and friends who are unable to spend time with the deceased in the hospital there is usually further opportunity to do so at the funeral director's office.

No paperwork has to be signed or completed by family members when a patient dies.

Please let us know if you have any special requests or would like any practical, emotional, cultural or spiritual help during this time. You can ask to speak to a Social Worker during business hours. We also have Chaplains from various faiths available, please ask social work or nursing staff.

You are also welcome to call in your own religious minister or representative if this is easier. Aboriginal Support Workers can be contacted through the hospital switchboard.

Personal belongings

All personal belongings of the deceased are normally given to a member of the family when they are leaving the hospital. Belongings can be collected from the ward at a later time if this is more convenient. It is important to tell staff as soon as possible if you, or other family members would like certain jewellery, (for example, a wedding ring) to be left on, or taken off the deceased.



Organising a funeral

Funeral arrangements do not need to be made on the day of the death. The first step is to check the Will of the deceased to see if there are any instructions regarding the funeral and then to also discuss what the family would like to do. The Executor of the Will should have the original Will and, in some situations, might be responsible for organising the funeral.

The next step is to contact a funeral company (Funeral Director), as soon as possible, who will help you with organising the funeral. If you have any concerns about what will happen or the time it will take, please make sure you tell the hospital Social Work Department. The deceased's body stays in the hospital mortuary until a Funeral Director has been chosen, then they take the deceased into their care/to the funeral home.

Pre-arranged funerals

Before organising a funeral, check if the deceased person had a funeral plan, funeral insurance fund or life insurance policy which covers the funeral cost.

Death certificate

When someone dies in hospital, the doctor signs a form to confirm the death and cause of death, however, this is not the official death certificate.

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages is responsible for providing death certificates. Funeral Directors usually tell the Registry of the death as a part of their service. You can also contact the Registry on tel: 13 77 88.

It can take a few weeks to receive the official death certificate. If you need the death confirmed immediately, please ask a member of your care team for a letter that says this has happened.

Paying for a funeral

It is often helpful to talk about the cost of organising a funeral with a few funeral directors before choosing one.

Other financial help to think about:

- A funeral plan the deceased person may have already organised.
- Money from the deceased person's bank account can often be used to pay for a funeral. Please discuss further with their financial institution.
- A prepaid benefit or investment scheme, superannuation fund or life insurance.
- The Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs, tel: 13 32 54.
- A health fund, trade union, pensioner association or other type of club they may belong to.
- The State Insurance regulatory Authority (SIRA) for Motor Accidents or Workers Compensation (check eligibility).
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council- offers Aboriginal people living in NSW grants to assist with funeral costs. Please see: <https://alc.org.au/funeral-fund/>
- Services Australia (Centrelink), tel: 13 23 00, to see if you can receive the bereavement assistance/allowance.



Legal matters

A *Will* is a legal document which outlines the deceased's wishes. An executor of the will is responsible for distributing the deceased's estate to the beneficiaries named in the will and pay off any debts from the estate (for example, property, money, and other belongings). If no Will can be found, the person dies *intestate*. It is helpful to ask for legal advice at this point from the NSW Trustee and Guardian (tel: 1300 109 290, www.tag.nsw.gov.au), LawAccess NSW (tel: 1300 888 529) or a private solicitor (Find a Lawyer – The Law Society of NSW, tel: (02) 9926 0333, www.lawsociety.com.au).

Deaths reported to the coroner

Under the law, the hospital must refer some deaths (for example, sudden death or unclear cause of death) to the NSW Coroner. This will be discussed with you further if needed. If this happens, the deceased body is taken to the Coroner's Court in Lidcombe (1A Main Avenue, Lidcombe, NSW, 2414).

Funeral arrangements can still start, however, there may be a delay in when the funeral can be held. Please make sure you inform the Funeral Director that the deceased is at the Coroner's Court.

Please contact the NSW Coroner's Court if you need more information about what will happen, how long it might take, or final decisions. tel: (02) 8584 7777 or via their website: www.coroners.nsw.gov.au.

Who to notify

Shortly after someone dies people/certain organisations may need to be notified. They will most likely ask for a certified copy of the Death Certificate. Some key organisations to notify are:

- Australian Electoral Commission
- Australian Taxation Office
- Banks, credit unions
- Centrelink
- Child Support Services
- Department of Immigration
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Educational Institutions
- Employers
- GP/Local Doctor/Health Professionals – dentist, optometrist
- Health Fund
- Insurance companies
- Landlord/Real Estate Agent
- Lawyer, if required, for legal matters such as probate/wills
- Medicare
- Superannuation fund
- Utilities (gas, electricity, water)
- Vehicle registration and licensing authorities
- Australian Death Notification Service (ADNS): The ADNS provides one online place where you can let many organisations know that someone has died. www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/australian-death-notification-service-adns
- For further information on who to notify please refer to the Service NSW guide: www.service.nsw.gov.au/guide/death-and-bereavement

About grief

Grief is a *normal and natural* feeling when a loved one dies. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' ways to grieve and no set timelines.

Common grief responses

After a death, we may experience a range of feelings, such as shock, sadness, anger, guilt or despair, as well as relief, hope and acceptance. Grief is likely to be more intense when the person has been central to our life. It can affect our concentration and thinking. It may cause physical symptoms such as difficulty in sleeping, headaches or loss of appetite.

Grief is an individual experience

Everyone grieves in their own way. We do not always know how people are grieving by what we see. Some people are open and express their grief, crying and want to talk. Others are more private or may be reluctant to talk and prefer to keep busy. It's important to respect each other's way of grieving, even if we don't necessarily understand it.

Grief doesn't have a timeline

Grief may be constant or intermittent. It may be triggered at any time by thoughts, objects, people, places or sounds. It's not unusual for grief to be felt over an extended period of time. It's okay to admit you are experiencing grief, whether it be weeks, months, years or even decades after the death.

Life grows around grief

It is a common myth that people 'get over' grief. With time, the pain will lessen, but the sorrow we feel may always be part of us. When people grieve, they are coming to terms with what has changed in their lives. There is no 'return to normal'; rather, we have to learn to live around a new kind of normal, re-learning the world and ourselves within it.

When to seek help

Although grief can be very painful, many people find that with the support of their family and friends and their own resources, they gradually find ways to learn to live with their loss and do not need to seek professional help.

Sometimes however, the circumstances of dying or death may have been particularly distressing, or there may be circumstances in your life which make your grief complicated. If you are finding it difficult to manage on a day-to-day basis, it may be helpful to see your GP or a grief counsellor. It's okay to admit you are struggling with your grief. No-one will think any less of you if you ask for help along the way.

Acknowledgement: the above information is based on About Grief by the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement.

Supporting yourself whilst grieving

Here are some helpful ways of supporting yourself whilst grieving:

- Take the time and space to grieve. This may include taking some time off work.
- Allow yourself to express thoughts and feelings privately; perhaps a special place to think, write, or cry; collect photographs, listen to special music, or light a candle.
- Surround yourself with close family and friends.
- Talk to friends and family about how you are feeling sharing with other people can reduce the sense of isolation and loneliness that comes with grief.
- Understand other people's experiences through books, videos or articles.
- Accept help – allow people to make meals, clean, take children to school, saying 'yes' to help/assistance.
- Give yourself permission to have realistic expectations of yourself. You may not be able to do everything you would normally do straight away.
- Healthy diet (limit alcohol and caffeine), exercise and relaxation.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island People – take time to connect with country and nature.
- Look for support from grief services or web sites, consider joining a support group with others in a similar situation; talk with a grief counsellor to focus on your unique situation.
- In the early days following your loss you can call the hospital Social Workers for support or please refer to 'Support services and websites' and 'Free 24/7 telephone support numbers' listed in this brochure.

You may be able to use a Medicare Rebate to see a Psychologist or mental health accredited Social Worker for grief counselling. Please see your GP for further information and referral process. You may also be able to access free counselling through your work Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Please check with your employer.

Free 24/7 telephone support numbers

If you need to talk to someone immediately, the services listed below are ready to take your call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Ambulance/Police/Fire	000
After Hours GP/Nurse (HealthDirect)*	1800 022 222
Beyond Blue	1300 224 636
Free Translating/Interpreting Service.....	13 14 50
GriefLine **.....	1300 845 745
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800
Lifeline	13 11 14
Links2Home (housing support)	1800 152 152
Mensline	1300 789 978
NSW Mental Health Line	1800 011 511
'Open Arms' Veterans Crisis Support Line.....	1800 011 046
Red Nose Australia	1300 308 307
Suicide Call back Service	1300 659 467
The Compassionate Friends NSW	1800 671 621

**Monday to Friday, 11pm - 7:30am, Saturday, from 6pm. All day, Sundays & Public Holidays*

***GriefLine from 6am to 12am AEDT*



Support services and websites

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

Tel: 1800 642 066 or (03) 9265 2100..... www.grief.org.au

Cancer Council NSW

Tel: 13 11 20..... www.cancercouncil.com.au

Compassionate Friends NSW

For bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents of children who have died

Tel: 1800 671 621 www.tcfnsw.org.au

Good Grief

'Seasons for Healing' loss support program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Tel: 1300 379 569..... <https://www.goodgrief.org.au/seasons-healing>

GriefLine (6am to midnight, 7 days a week)

'Integrating Grief Program'. Free bereavement counselling and support

Tel: 1300 845 745..... www.griefline.org.au

Hammond care

If known to the Palliative care Team

Free counselling counselling in person, online telehealth or telephone

Tel: 1800 427 255..... www.hammond.com.au/services/palliative-centre/bereavement

JewishCare

Chessed Bereavement Support

Tel: 1300 133 660..... www.jewishcare.com.au/bereavement-support/

National Association of Loss and Grief (NALAG)

Tel: (02) 6882 9222 www.nalag.org.au

National Centre for Childhood Grief & Bereavement C.A.R.E Centre (Counselling for adults and children)

Tel: 1300 654 556..... www.childhoodgrief.org.au

Relationships Australia NSW

Tel: 1300 364 277..... www.relationshipsnsw.org.au

Solace NSW

For widows and widowers

Tel: (02) 9519 2820 Email: SolaceNSW@gmail.com www.solace.org.au/nsw/

The Salvation Army

Tel: 13 72 58..... www.salvos.org.au

Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)

Tel: 1800 838 372..... www.dva.gov.au/

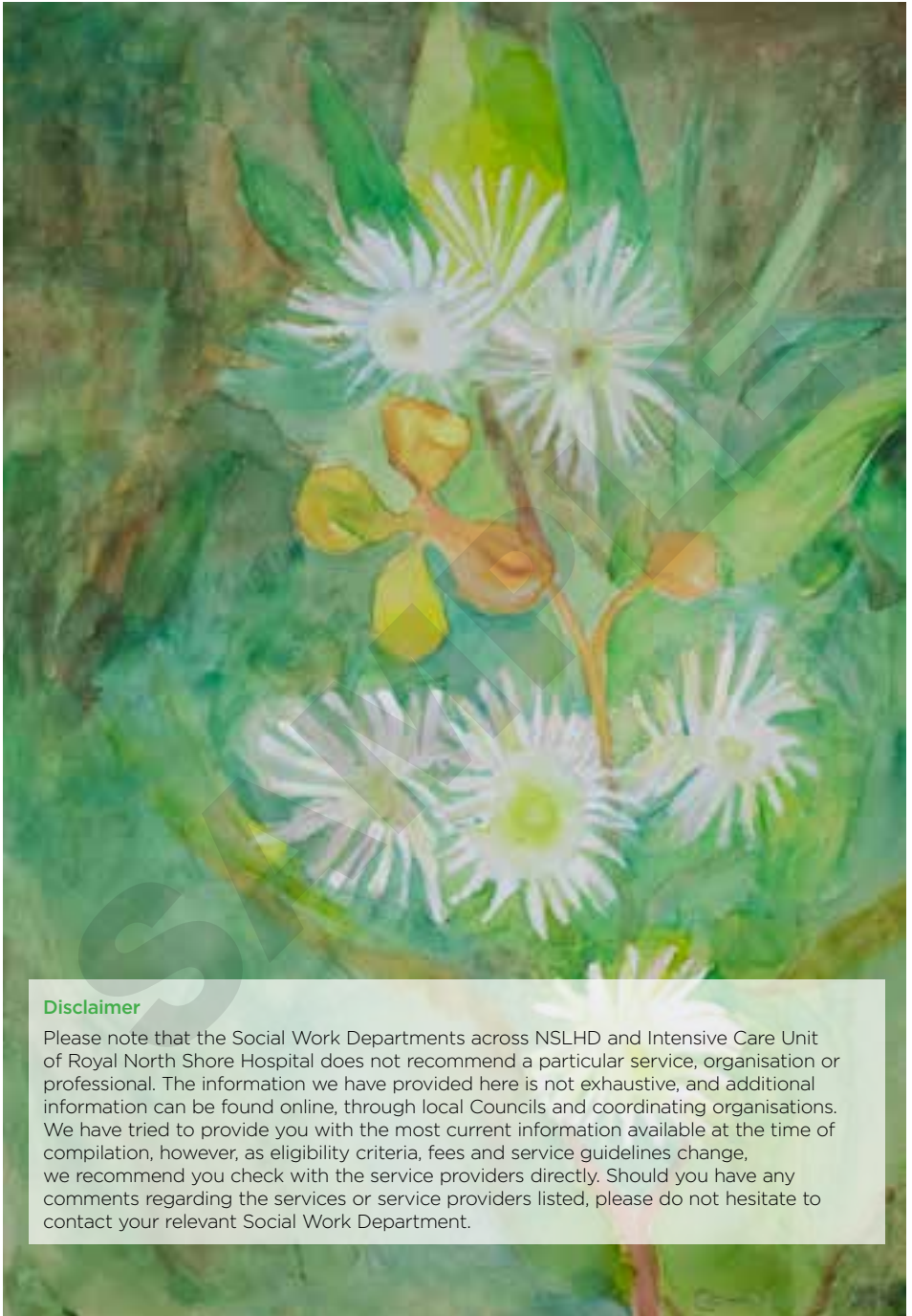
Glossary

Term	Definition
Australian Death Notification Service	The Australian Death Notification Service (ADNS) allows people to digitally notify multiple organisations that someone has died.
Australian Electoral Commission	The Australian Electoral Commission is the independent federal agency in charge of organising, conducting and supervising federal Australian elections, by-elections and referendums.
Australian Electoral Commission	The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is an Australian statutory agency and the principal revenue collection body for the Australian Government.
Beneficiary	A beneficiary is the person or entity named in a life insurance policy or Will to receive a benefit/payment from the estate.
Bereavement Assistance/ Allowance	Services Australia have Government funded payments and services that may help those who are grieving the death of someone and experiencing a difficult time.
Centrelink	Centrelink delivers social security payments and services to Australians through Services Australia.
Chaplain	A representative of religious or non-religious affiliation who provides spiritual and emotional support during times of illness, grief and loss.
Child Support Services	Child Support Services are delivered through Services Australia, providing payments to parents and carers of children.

Term	Definition
Coroner's Court	Coroners ensure that all sudden, unexpected or unexplained deaths are properly investigated. Coroners are located at the Coroners Court in Lidcombe, Sydney.
Death Certificate	A death certificate is an official document holding information about the person who has died. Often the funeral director will assist with applying for the death certificate.
Department of Immigration	A Federal Government body, now under the Department of Home Affairs, that manages Australian visas, immigration and citizenship.
Disbelief	Inability or refusal to accept that something is true or real.
Educational Institutions	A place of gaining education; for example, primary schools, high schools, tertiary education institutions and universities.
Employers	A person or organisation that employs people.
Executor of the Will	When a person dies, an executor is the person who is appointed by the deceased to administer their estate.
Financial Institution	Businesses that provide financial services; for example, banks and credit unions.
Funeral Director	A person who assists with funeral arrangements, as well as provides bereavement support and advice to families and friends of the deceased.
Funeral Insurance Fund	Funds that help cover the payment of the funeral.

Term	Definition
Funeral Plan	Similar to the Funeral Insurance Fund, Funeral Plans consist of payments that are made in advance to cover the cost of a funeral.
Grief	An intense feeling of sadness and/or distress following the death of a loved one.
Grief counselling	Counselling that focuses on supporting those who are experiencing grief.
Health Fund	Public and private companies that provide different levels of funding and health benefits to their clients.
Insurance companies	Companies that provide and sell insurance plans.
Intermittent	Occurring at irregular intervals.
Intestate	Not having made a Will before one has died.
Investment Scheme	
Landlord/Real Estate Agent	The owner/manager of a property that is being leased or rented out.
Lawyer	A person who practices law and provides legal advice.
Life Insurance Policy	A contract between an insurance policy holder and an insurance company. Depending on the policy, a payment is made upon the death of the insured person.
Medicare	Medicare provides access to healthcare and benefits to Australian residents.
Mental Health Accredited Social Worker	Social Workers who provide services in mental health settings.

Term	Definition
Mortuary	A room where deceased bodies are kept until burial or cremation.
Pensioner Association	
Physical stress	Tension and/or exhaustion felt in the body from distressing circumstances.
Psychological stress	Feeling emotionally distressed.
Psychologist	Psychologists specialise in cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes, providing treatment for people who may need help.
Realistic expectations	Setting achievable and sensible goals.
Shock	A sudden upsetting or surprising experience.
The Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs	Government body that supports people, and their families, who have served in Australian defence.
Superannuation Fund	A long-term investment fund which you can access when you retire.
The Estate	A term that refers to a person's assets after they die.
The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages	A registry that records all life events in New South Wales.
Trade Union	Organisations that help resolve workplace issues.
Triggered	A response that is caused by a particular action, process, or situation.
Will	A legal document that states a person's wishes regarding the division of their estate after death.



Disclaimer

Please note that the Social Work Departments across NSLHD and Intensive Care Unit of Royal North Shore Hospital does not recommend a particular service, organisation or professional. The information we have provided here is not exhaustive, and additional information can be found online, through local Councils and coordinating organisations. We have tried to provide you with the most current information available at the time of compilation, however, as eligibility criteria, fees and service guidelines change, we recommend you check with the service providers directly. Should you have any comments regarding the services or service providers listed, please do not hesitate to contact your relevant Social Work Department.