

# ICV RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BURIAL PROCESS OF A COVID-19 DECEASED

Last Update: 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020



This document has been produced in consultation with members of the Medical community (MHPA), religious leaders, community leaders and most Muslim Funeral Directors in Victoria. We recommend the following process of handling and burying of this deceased who has died due to COVID-19:

1. All funerals (Janazas) of the COVID-19 will be carried out as per strict infection control procedures (Part 3 of the [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare \(2019\)](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/infection-control-guidelines/standard-additional-precautions)).
2. All staff involved with the such funerals will adhere to strict PPE guidelines <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/infection-control-guidelines/standard-additional-precautions>.
3. The body of the deceased will not be taken out of the sealed bags.
4. Ritual cleansing of the body then will be performed with either TAYYAMAM (with clean sand) or MASA (wiping over the body bag with a damp cloth). This will be performed over the sealed bag. This will be performed by the funeral Director or other trained person (if the deceased is female this procedure will be performed by a female member of the funeral service).
5. The body bag should then be shrouded (covered in cloth over the sealed bag) in preparation for the funeral (Janaza).
6. The body of the deceased is to be taken directly to the cemetery.
7. Funeral (Janaza) prayers with the family to be conducted at the grave site. Please note social distancing rules apply. Maximum permitted number of attendees is 10 but can be subject to change pending further advice. Please refer to the guidelines for current guidelines: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-stay-home-and-restricted-activities-directions-faq>.

### **Initial Steps before/after death – Role of Family**

- a. When informed of imminent death please contact your Muslim Funeral Director.
- b. Provide the Funeral Director's contact details to the relevant hospital authorities.
- c. The Funeral Director will then contact the hospital and start the process.
- d. If you have a pre-purchased funeral site or have a preference for a particular cemetery, let your Funeral Director know so they can facilitate your needs.
- e. Please discuss with your Funeral Director the costs involved in the burial process (this includes the grave site, cemetery costs and also the Funeral Director's fees)
- f. Please organize with the relevant hospital authorities to obtain the death certificate (the body will not be released without this document).
- g. The Hospital Death Certificate will also be required by the Cemetery authorities before burial.

### **Death in Hospital - Procedure**

- a. The family may not be present at the time of death nor be able to view the body. This could be due to the family being in quarantine or due to hospital policies which will vary based on the circumstances at the time. The family will need to discuss this with the hospital.
- b. When the person dies, the body of the deceased is washed by the attending staff and placed in double leak-proof bags and a label placed on it stating that this is a COVID-19 deceased body.
- c. The body is then sent down to the morgue until collection by the Funeral Director.
- d. Family will not have access to the body at this stage.

### **Role of Funeral Director**

- a. The funeral director will liaise with the hospital to organise the collection of the body
- b. The funeral director will also liaise with the cemetery to organize the preparation of the grave and burial date and time.
- c. This will be conveyed to the family.
- d. Funeral Directors will adhere to all infection control procedures and will have access to PPE required for handling of the deceased body.

### Procedure at Morgue

- a. Funeral director and assistants will carry out the basic rituals of cleansing, in this case Masa or Tayyamum over the body bag.
- b. The deceased body will be placed in the casket having been shrouded.
- c. The shroud body will then be placed in the casket and closed.
- d. The body will then be transported to the cemetery.

### Janaza Prayers and Burial Procedure

- a. At the grave site, Funeral (Janaza prayers) will be conducted while observing the government regulations of social distancing and numbers
- b. The shrouded body will be taken out of the casket and gently lowered into the grave either using the “pulley system” or “straps”.
- c. The necessary planks will be placed over the body (as per usual).
- d. Mourners present will be allowed to place the ritual 3 lots of sand using the shovels provided. Please ensure that you are wearing gloves (OHS and cemetery rules).
- e. The grave will then be filled by the cemetery staff.
- f. Final supplication will be made and the mourners will depart.

### Acknowledgement

*The ICV would like to acknowledge the support and advice provided by the Muslim Health Professionals Australia (MPHA) in the preparation of this document. We also would like to thank Sheik Shady Alsuleiman (President of ANIC) for his ongoing support.*

Contact the ICV if you have any questions by emailing [emergencyassist@icv.org.au](mailto:emergencyassist@icv.org.au) We have set up a dedicated team to respond to any concerns relating to COVID-19.

**NB: Please note these recommendations and procedures are based on the current situation and State and Federal Government Guidelines. These will be subject to change if the authorities stipulate otherwise. These procedures are also in line with advice from qualified Imams.**