



# A Guide for Health Professionals – Funerals and Sorry Business during the coronavirus pandemic

Western Australia's restrictions and controlled border arrangement are based on current health advice. Sometimes restrictions change without a lot of notice. These decisions are made to protect the health and wellbeing of the community from the risks of COVID-19.

.....

**“ Funerals, like any gathering, pose a potential risk for the transmission of viruses, such as COVID-19.**

.....

For the most up to date information on the current restrictions, which may impact capacity limits, please visit:  
<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

## **Sorry Business and other cultural activities are very important to our mob**

Regardless of the situation or risk, we all have a part to play in keeping Elders, others who are already ill and our community safe.

Our culture and family connections have kept us strong for many years. In these difficult times we need to continue to be strong by keeping in touch with family and practicing cultural activities within our household.

## **Travelling to remote Aboriginal communities**

Travel to many remote Aboriginal communities is restricted. This means the needs of some families may still not be met. Family need to talk about different ways to hold the service and burial. This may even include considering very difficult options such as:

- \* holding only a funeral within the remote community – with memorials, processions and tombstone openings for the wider family and community to be held later.
- \* using audio-visual technology to allow those not at the funeral to be 'present'.

For more information on entering remote Aboriginal communities and exemptions please visit:

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-remote-aboriginal-communities-restrictions-entering>

For more information about the easing of travel restrictions please visit:

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-travel-advice>



## Other ways to support families during Sorry Business

Saying goodbye to a loved one when they pass away is important.

If you cannot be there during this time, there are ways you can still support families including:

- \* sending video messages of condolence to family and screen them at the funeral if that is possible
- \* holding your own memorial service at a venue close to your home and providing copies of funeral programs and/or eulogies
- \* using video technology to view the service from your home

If you are using technology to grieve we encourage you to do it in a culturally safe way around your family.

## Body viewing

Family members should be allowed to view the body and standard precautions should be observed.

Family members are advised **NOT** to kiss or touch the deceased.

## Advice for preparation and funeral practices

For more information regarding preparation and funeral practices please visit the guide below for the most up to date advice.

[health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-funeral-directors](https://health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-funeral-directors)

## Physical distancing and personal hygiene

Like at any public gathering, there is potential for the transmission of viruses between those attending a funeral.

Continue to practice good personal hygiene by sneezing or coughing into your elbow or a tissue, dispose of used tissues in a bin and wash hands often.

If unwell, don't attend the funeral.

Stay 1.5 metres away from others at the funeral where possible.

Don't make unnecessary physical contact with others - avoid handshakes, hugs and kisses.

Visit the **HealthyWA** website for more advice on good hygiene and physical distancing.

### Help is available

These restrictions for funerals and Sorry Business and the impacts of COVID-19 can be distressing for our community. If you or someone you care about is feeling distressed, call **beyondblue** on **1300 224 636** for free telephone counselling or call **Lifeline** in a mental health crisis on **13 11 14**.

### For more information

Visit the **HealthyWA** website for up-to-date COVID-19 health information and advice at [healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/coronavirus) or call the Western Australian enquiry line on **13 COVID (13 268 43)**.

For Aboriginal resources go to: [https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A\\_E/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-information-for-Aboriginal-people](https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-information-for-Aboriginal-people)

