

Different Farewells

A Guide

There is more than one way to mark a death

There is no single right way to farewell someone.

Some gatherings are quiet and intimate.

Some are structured and time-bound.

Some happen weeks or months later.

Some take place at home. Others outdoors. Others in formal venues.

The format is simply the container.

What matters is whether it feels right for the people involved.

The following pages detail common structures. Each can be shaped to reflect the life that has ended.

If you are unsure where to begin, you may also find it helpful to read:

[Understanding Your Choices](#)



A Chapel or Church Service

Overview

This is the format many people recognise as a “traditional funeral.”

It is usually held before burial or cremation and takes place in:

- A funeral director’s chapel
- A cemetery chapel
- A church or faith-based setting

The structure is typically ordered and time-bound.

What This Format Offers

- Familiar structure
- Clear beginning, middle, and end
- Formal committal
- Contained timeframe

In a church, the service may follow established liturgy.

In a chapel, there is often more flexibility within the structure, and the service can be entirely secular.

For many families, this predictability feels steady.

Practical Considerations

- Venue availability
- Time limits
- AV capabilities
- Number of speakers
- Whether burial or cremation follows immediately

Personalising a Structured Service

Even within a formal structure, meaningful ritual can be included.

You may wish to explore:

- [Creating Personal Ritual Guide](#)
- [Music As Ritual Planning Guide](#)

You may also wish to read:

- [Understanding Your Choices](#)

A Community or Celebration-Style Gathering

Overview

Less formal. Often longer. Sometimes conversational in tone.

This format may be held before burial or cremation, or in place of a chapel service.

Common venues include:

- Community halls
- Gardens
- Beaches
- Function rooms
- Private properties

What This Format Offers

- Flexibility
- Shared food and storytelling
- Open contributions
- Live music
- Visual displays

Without some gentle structure, gatherings can risk feeling emotionally scattered.

With care, they can feel connected and generous.

Creating Cohesion

Even relaxed gatherings benefit from intentional design.

See:

- [Creating Personal Ritual Guide](#)
- [Music As Ritual Planning Guide](#)

You may also wish to compare this with:

- [A Memorial Service](#)

Practical Considerations

- Venue availability
- Time limits
- AV capabilities
- Number of speakers
- Whether burial or cremation follows immediately

A Memorial Service

Overview

A memorial service is held after burial or cremation has already taken place.

The disposition occurs privately, often with only a small group present.

The larger gathering happens later.

What This Format Offers

- No time pressure
- Greater planning space
- Flexibility with venue
- Emotional breathing room

Because the body is not present, the tone often feels reflective rather than procedural.

Practical Considerations

- Timing (how long after the death)
- Venue
- Managing expectations around absence of the coffin
- Communication to attendees about the format

Designing Meaning Without Physical Presence

Symbolic acts become especially important.

See:

- [Creating Personal Ritual Guide](#)
- [Music As Ritual Planning Guide](#)

You may also wish to read:

- [Private Farewells](#)
- [Why Ceremony After Cremation Still Matters](#)

A Home-Based Farewell

Overview

Held in a private residence.

This may occur immediately after death or in the days before burial or cremation.

It may be the primary ceremony or part of a longer process.

What This Format Offers

- Intimacy
- Time
- Participation
- Familiar surroundings

Home-based farewells allow proximity and involvement.

Practical Considerations

- Care and storage of the body
- Legal timeframes (including registration and cremation/burial deadlines)
- Space and ventilation
- Support from professionals if needed

Creating Simplicity with Intention

Small spaces benefit from quiet ritual and carefully chosen music.

See:

- [Creating Personal Ritual Guide](#)
- [Music As Ritual Planning Guide](#)

You may also wish to read:

- [Understanding Your Choices](#)

Or Visit the [**Australian Home Funeral Alliance \(AHFA\)**](#) Website

A Private Farewell

Overview

A small gathering with limited attendees.

Sometimes only immediate family.

Sometimes only one or two people.

It may take place:

- At a chapel
- At the graveside
- At home
- At the cremation

What This Format Offers

- Emotional containment
- Reduced overwhelm
- Space for complexity

It may stand alone or be followed by a larger memorial.

Practical Considerations

- Clarity about who is invited
- Communication to extended networks
- Whether there will be a later gathering

Small Does Not Mean Meaningless

Even very small gatherings benefit from structure and symbolic acts.

See:

- [Creating Personal Ritual Guide](#)
- [Music As Ritual Planning Guide](#)

You may also wish to explore:

- [Memorial Services](#)

A Committal or Graveside Gathering

Overview

Held at the cemetery, usually at the place of burial.

This may be:

- The primary service
- A brief committal following a chapel service
- Or a gathering at a cremation memorial garden

What This Format Offers

- Directness
- Physical connection to place
- Participation in the committal
- It is often shorter and more focused.
- The presence of the grave brings clarity.
- There is a physical sense of placement.
- There is a clear moment of leave-taking.

Practical Considerations

- Weather
- Sound
- Time constraints

Outdoor Ritual

Graveside gatherings benefit from simple, participatory acts.

See:

- [Creating Personal Ritual Guide](#)
- [Music As Ritual Planning Guide](#)

A Natural or Environmentally Focused Farewell

Overview

This approach prioritises ecological values.

The farewell itself may take any structural form (chapel, graveside, home, or memorial).

The environmental focus shapes decisions about the body, the container, and the setting, rather than dictating a specific format.

It may include:

- Natural burial
- Biodegradable coffin or shroud
- Minimal intervention
- Outdoor settings

What This Format Offers

- Alignment with environmental ethics
- Simplicity
- Reduced material impact

Practical Considerations

- Cemetery regulations
- Coffin or shroud requirements
- Floral choices
- Printed materials
- Transport

Other Considerations

You may like to visit the [**Natural Death Advocacy Network \(NDAN\)**](#) Website

A Closing Reflection

There is no hierarchy among these options.

A farewell does not need to look a certain way.

*It does not need to follow a template.
It does not need to be rushed.*

The structure you choose becomes the container.

*Within that container, you may include music, silence, ritual,
storytelling, or shared action.*

The question is **not**:

“What do people usually do?”

The question **is**:

*“What feels right for this death, and for those
who are living with it?”*



If you would like guidance navigating these options in a no-pressure, obligation-free conversation, I welcome you to reach out.

My Reflections & Comparisons

Use this space to note thoughts, questions, or comparisons as you explore each farewell option. There is no right way to use this page, it is simply here for you.

Options That Resonated:

Which formats felt immediately right or worth exploring further?

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Questions to Explore:

What do I need to understand better or discuss with family?

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Comparing Two Formats:

If weighing up options, what are the key differences that matter for us?

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What Matters Most:

Based on what I have read, what feels essential for this farewell?
(For example: intimacy, time, participation, place, simplicity, ritual)

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