

A Guide to Prepare Your Life's Ultimate Adventure

NEVER FORGOTTEN

Before it's too late. A **Forever** Legacy. **For** Future Generations.

Professor Michael Good AO, FASM FRACP FQA FTSE

“A number of people would know certain things about you, however no one person has all the knowledge. NEVER FORGOTTEN removes all the guess work honouring one's Forever Legacy.”

Dr John DeGroot B.A, LL.B Ph.D., Accredited Succession Law Specialist cites,
“An invaluable resource providing everyone peace of mind and a compassionate gift for families, for future generations.”

Your first breath was the beginning of your journey towards death.

“Champion the freedom to make personal choices in dying. At the end of life, freedom and dignity will reflect you did it your way and Never be Forgotten.”

The human race is moving through a change of consciousness and part of this change is facing how we think about life and our death. The increasing number of books on spirituality making the best-seller lists in recent years clearly reflects this shift. One from fearful thinking around passing to embracing death as a celebration of life.

Life and death are entwined because without death, life would be monotonous, devoid of intensity, purpose and meaning.

Death is graduation time. A time for a person to be honored for their life's contributions and their legacy etched in memoriam for future generations.

It doesn't take a fatalistic person to recognize the value in planning your final farewell in advance, however it means acknowledging that one day you will pass. We are all conditioned to enjoy our life in this realm, so confronting our mortality can be daunting. It takes strength, grace and courage, requiring emotional reserves to deal with the intensity.

It is never too early, or too soon to begin to think about, talk about and prepare for our life's last and ultimate adventure. Our eventuality is definitely something we do not want to wait until the last minute when we may be in a state of diminished capacity impairing our ability to make logical decisions with time, thought and dignity.

This authentic celebration of your life will reflect everything you want and equally important, nothing you don't. It is the only way you can guarantee your funeral service, your final ever-lasting words to loved ones and your social media and digital legacy are immortalized as an expression of you.

The reality of accepting our inevitability can be a precursor to helping us let go of our fears, capture a sense of control over our destiny and live more fully in the present moment. Ultimately we all experience death, so the more prepared we are the better. Just like first impressions, final impressions also count.

And yet, the average person spends 11 years in front of the television, 4 years on the internet, 27 days standing in cues or waiting for public transport and 26 years sleeping. We spend weeks, sometimes months planning a wedding, birthdays, holidays, even our retirement. Typically a person has 28 000 days of life, but the trouble is we think we have time.

Most of us don't know when our eventuality will transpire and usually we don't ponder our death until it is clearly visible upon the horizon.

By investing a few hours taking proactive steps towards specifying your wishes allows your loved ones to spend their first days following your passing grieving and honoring your memory, without the burden of scrambling to make funeral arrangements.

Your family and friends will have time to reflect the impact you had on their lives as well as your contributions to others, alleviated of the added stress of preparing your funeral service during an already emotionally charged time of bereavement.

Forward planning is a selfless and compassionate act. Your tailored, personalized farewell will be more enriching and memorable, speaking to the person you are.

Protecting your social media and digital legacy guarantees the memory of you lingers and your identity preserved in perpetuity for future generations. The pen that writes Your story must be held in Your hand!

Champion the freedom to specify any or all preferences and wishes. Planning your ultimate destiny will feel empowering, provide a sense of control and the satisfaction all decisions were your own.

Removing all the guess work for others will create a powerful shift from your physical presence to one based on treasured memories.

Your ever-loving words will be appreciated and forever cherished by those nearest to you, helping them to seamlessly continue their bond with you in new and lasting ways.

We all live to live, but death is a place where eternal relationships are forged, because death ends a life not a relationship.

Enjoy your precious remaining days with peace of mind knowing you will **Never** be **Forgotten**.

It doesn't matter when you do it but it matters that you do!

“As humans we can hold both the possibility of continued life and the possibility of dying in our hearts and minds at the same time”

Revisit your **Never Forgotten** choices and print a hard copy to pen any additional thoughts, wishes or amendments as your life changes. It's not necessarily a one-step process, but an ongoing 'work-in-progress'. This expression of you may even become a starting point to writing your memoirs.

Deciding when we may pass from this realm is usually beyond our control, but deciding how you wish to be remembered is imperative, guaranteeing *Your Life* is expressed in *Your Words, Your Way* with the satisfaction knowing you were farewelled your way and you will **Never** be **Forgotten**.

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“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to be born and a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

Your Personal and Family Details

Prefix: (eg. Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., Sir, Hon.)

Family Name:

Given Names (in full):

The name which appears on your legal documents e.g. a birth certificate, marriage certificate, passport or driver’s license.

Suffix: (eg. Jnr., Snr.)

Nick Name / Pet Name *(if you wish it to be known/remembered):*

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Occupation *(if you wish it to be known/remembered):*

Where have you lived? Nominate which years you resided.

Father's full name:

Father's occupation (pre-retirement, if relevant):

Mother's full name and maiden name:

Mother's occupation (pre-retirement, if relevant):

Name and contact details of your Next-of-Kin:

Name:

Relationship to you:

Address:

Mobile:

Email:

Status (married, widowed, separated but not divorced, divorced, never married, de facto relationship):

Date of marriage:

Place of marriage:

Spouse's full name (and maiden name where applicable):

Details of any previous marriages (dates and full name of former spouse/s):

If you are widowed:

Date of your spouse's death:

Location of your late partner's memorial or resting place:

Name and details of your child/children:

Full name (list eldest first):

Date of Birth:

Gender:

"Discover what is essential to you in living and in dying. After all while dying, life is distilled down to the essential"

Your Last Will and Testament and Your Advance Directives

Have you already prepared a Last Will and Testament?

No:

Yes, and it can be found at the following location and/or name of Solicitor:

Your "Last Will and Testament" or "Will" is a document that describes how and to whom the property and assets in your estate are distributed following your death. Your nominated Executor or Public Trustee is the legally appointed person responsible for the settlement of your estate.

If you pass without an existing Will, relatives may inherit your possessions according to State laws which may or may not reflect your wishes. In essence, this may result in somebody obtaining all or some of your property unless specified in a current and legally-binding Will. A Will also provides instructions regarding who should be the legal guardian/s of minor children in the event of your death, rather than the courts deciding.

A Will protects your lifetime assets, family heirlooms and precious belongings are bequeathed to the people (or charities) of your choosing and not by default to others. You should update your Will (or “Codicil”) if your circumstances or beneficiary preferences change. A “Codicil” is a legal modification that amends specific provisions or an inclusion to your existing Last Will and Testament.

Should you elect to appoint a Digital Executor for your Social Media and Digital Legacy it is recommended your Digital Executor’s name is incorporated in your Will enabling your Legal Executor to contact them to implement your wishes when the appointed time transpires (your Legal Executor may also act as your Digital Executor).

Furthermore if you have scribed any lasting words to loved ones, these ever-lasting written messages may be a person apart from your executor/s who delivers your messages, such as a trusted friend. It would be helpful to cite their contact details in this document or your existing Will. Alternatively, if your personalized messages are being stored along with your Will, ensure clear instructions regarding their distribution in terms of timing and by whom or clearly stated.

This document does not replace the necessity for the provision of a Will and Testament. In fact, your Will is the only legally binding document guaranteed by law to administer your directives. Never Forgotten captures your heart-felt personal wishes, something not typically incorporated in a traditional Will.

Do you have a Last Will and Testament (and Codicil)?

No:

Yes, and a copy is stored at the following location.

“The art of living well and the art of dying well are one” (Epicurus)

Does your Will (or Codicil) specify Advance Care Directives?

No:

Yes, and my wishes should be considered. *Any amendments to your existing Advance Care Directives should be legally formalized in your Last Will and Testament:*

Yes, and the wishes expressed in my Last Will and Testament should take precedence:

Advance Care Planning gives you the opportunity to specify the type of care, medical interventions and treatments you would like (or not wish) to receive for various possible scenarios towards the end of your life. These directives are enforced by An Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA) or Durable Power of Attorney (POA).

These documented instructions either consent to, or refuse, specified medical treatments articulating your care and lifestyle preferences which are then lawfully and ethically upheld in the event you are not competent or capable of communicating your wishes or making informed decisions. For example, do-not-resuscitate (or intervene) orders DNR/DNI.

Sometimes family, particularly during a time of stress wish to hold onto a loved one as long as humanly possible regardless of prolonging the inevitability or the physical strain a dying person may endure in the process or associated costs to extend a life through medical intervention or applying heroic measures.

Furthermore, family members may not all agree with a particular course of action and possible disagreements may transpire, all of which avoidable by clearly and concisely specifying your wishes.

An Enduring Power of Attorney or Durable Power of Attorney document designates a person to execute medical as well as financial and personal decisions on your behalf. It is recommended you check your local laws and seek professional, qualified legal advice from your lawyer/solicitor to formally arrange your Advance Care Directives.

“If you cannot be a poet, be the poem” (David Carradine)

Donating Your Body

I wish to and/or have pre-arranged to donate my entire body to science or a medical institution after my death:

No:

Yes, at the following institution (specify name, address, contact number and attached any relevant documents):

Whole Body or Anatomical Donation is your decision to bequeath your body to science or an educational or medical institution such as a university, medical research institute or other health-related facility. Typically the body is dissected to assist with advancements in diagnostic research or educational purposes such as mortuary science, medical, nursing and/or dentistry.

If you consent to a Whole Body Donation you are unable to also be an organ donor, whereby you specify individual organs be donated at the time of your passing. Be mindful, ideally your body is required as soon as possible following your final act, therefore this decision may impact on your choice of funeral service. However, this compassionate gesture is likely to assist towards improvements in the delivery of medical procedures, increasing longevity for others and better health for future generations.

“I am you; you are me. You are the waves; I am the ocean. Know this and be free, be divine” (Sri Sathya Sai Baba)

Donating Your Organs and/or Tissues

I would like to specify the following organs donated for the treatment of others:

None:

Only the following:

Heart and Heart Tissue

Pancreas

Liver

Bone and Bone Marrow

Musculoskeletal Tissue eg Tendons, Ligaments and Connective Tissue

Kidneys

Corneas

Stomach

Lungs

Skin

Intestines / Bowel

Eyes and Tissue

Face Transplant

Many internal organs are still functional after your passing and therefore can be harvested for transplantation to another person. Organ donation is a process to surgically remove useful organs once you are clinically dead called “brain death”, and be given to recipients who need a particular organ to sustain their health and undoubtedly prolong their life.

Brain death is when blood flow to the brain has ceased. There are no age or health restrictions to bequeath your organs and/or tissues, and with parental consent, children can also elect to donate their organs. In addition to nominating your preference should you wish to donate an organ or multiple organs you can formally register to be an organ donor if you are 16 years or older. Most countries have an established register for this purpose, for example Donate Life in America, NHSBT Organ Donation in the United Kingdom and The Australian Organ Donor Register.

Organs able to be transplanted to another person include the heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, and intestines. In addition, tissues can be donated including the cornea, bone marrow, heart valve skin, and connective tissue used towards treating blindness, burns, arthritis, heart disease and a number of other congenital defects. Face transplants are also being performed.

Organ donation is a surgical procedure and this operation will not disfigure your body in any way (with the exception of a facial transplant). Therefore becoming an organ donor will not interfere with your final disposition, including if you choose to have a viewing/visitation of your body prior to your burial or cremation. Donating your organs is likely to extend a person's life which is one of the greatest gifts you can bequeath.

“In living and in dying we cannot truly know what someone wants until we ask them or you speak up”

Handling of Your Body

If the circumstances are desirable, I would like my body to be left undisturbed for the following nominated hours along with my specified handling directions:

Methods of caring for the body after death vary from culture to culture. Your religious beliefs, ethnic values, or cultural background may require a special custom or consideration soon after your passing. Care for the body immediately after death in some cultures is typically due to a belief relating to preparing for either your spirit, soul, subtle mind or energy (to list a few cultural variations) to be honored or released or a chance to move to another realm.

Many Asian cultures and Buddhist philosophies recommend not touching the body after a person's last breath due to the belief that their life force or spirit remains present for a time and if the body is moved then a smooth transition to the afterlife cannot transpire.

Regardless of any belief system you may or may not consider, within the first few hours of passing before rigor mortis sets in, many cultures usually ensures the body is washed, the mouth is supported shut and the deceased limbs straightened (lying flat) or positioned as they have possibly requested, before the joints are unable to be moved. Often the eyes are open following death and therefore within this timeframe the eyelids are usually gently closed. The last place in the body that warmth will leave is around the heart. The term for the body turning cold is called algor mortis, or referred to as the death chill.

A dead body/corpse/cadaver should be treated as in life during the first few hours of passing. It is a time for loved ones, family and friends to sit quietly, spend time with the deceased and console each other with memories of happier times. Typically there is no urgency to do anything with the deceased at this time, unless you have arranged to be cryogenically preserved. The death must be "pronounced" by someone of authority such as a doctor, aged-care facility or hospice nurse for an official Medical Certificate of Death (death certificate) to be prepared.

I would like my body to be embalmed:

No:

Yes, with the following details:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

The Embalming process is primarily performed to disinfect and preserve a body in preparation for an open coffin/casket or viewing. Disinfection is important for those who have handled your remains and for public safety. Preservation is for the traditional gathering of family and friends to view the body and pay tribute to the deceased. Without embalming, most remains become unviewable within a relatively short time.

If a funeral service can only transpire upon the return of family members travelling from another country, then embalming the body will assist in preserving the deceased to allow adequate time between one's passing and the time of their funeral service. The embalming process typically takes 3–4 hours including dressing the body and cosmetology (the application of make-up to the deceased to bring color and the appearance of warmth back into their face and hands). A viewing/visitation however may still take place without the deceased being embalmed.

If a post-mortem (or autopsy) requires the consent of my Next of Kin, I would like them to:

The way you specify the handling of your body may be due to your religious beliefs, family traditions, cultural preferences or simply to express your personal wishes. For example, some Asian cultures believe the body should remain intact after death and therefore forbid an autopsy.

An autopsy or post-mortem, (which means after a person dies), is an examination performed to obtain as many medical facts as possible towards why a person has passed away. The results are typically forwarded to the deceased's Next of Kin.

The decision to execute an autopsy is yours, unless unusual legal circumstances regarding the mechanics of death, then a medical examiner or coroner has the authority to order an autopsy. Once you have passed, only the legal Next of Kin, following the law of succession, or an attending physician has the right to request an autopsy. There is no part of the autopsy procedure which prevents the viewing or visitation of your body at your funeral service, although depending on the circumstances an autopsy may delay the timing of your final farewell gathering.

Following my passing I request the following:

In the Western world people typically pass away in hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, retirement villages or some medical/health care facility or retirement / aged care institution and the body is stored on the premises, such as a morgue or mortuary, until verification of death and the disposition (funeral) service. The corpse/cadaver is stored in a cold room reducing, but not ceasing, the rate of body decomposition.

However, if a loved one passes at home, family may spend time saying their goodbyes and sharing memories of the deceased before the doctor is called and the body is collected by the funeral home/funeral director/ mortician for final disposition preparations.

If your preference is to spend your final days in the comfort of your home or depending on your circumstances in a specific care-facility, it is recommended you clearly specify your wishes for your family to honor. Whilst generally in good health people often prefer to stay in their home and have a nurse or other care giver visit them regularly or stay with a loved one rather than be hospitalized.

Consideration to any medical care or attention a person may require is imperative, however outlining your preferences in advance will avoid confusion and possibly disagreements amongst family members.

If I am overseas at the time of passing I want my body to be Repatriated to (nominate where you wish your final disposition to take place eg country, city/town and any other special requests):

Where you decide to hold your final farewell may not be where you are at the time of your passing. A repatriation is when a deceased person is moved from one state, or country to another so their final rites can ensue. This process may involve State and/or Federal Government Departments and Consular Representatives or equivalent being involved, depending on the country the corpse is leaving and returning.

Clearly specifying your final resting place is important to ensure your wishes are adhered and avoid any possible disagreements amongst family members. For example, you may have been born and raised in a city or town where your parents may still reside, but you re-located to another city for work or to be with a spouse or partner. If your preferences are not clear, your parents may wish your final resting place to be in your home town, perhaps next to their planned site of burial, whereas your partner or other loved ones may prefer a local memorial to enable them to visit you.

To ensure all loved ones are considered you may nominate your place of burial (your body or ashes) is near your life partner and/or children, but your service to be held in your home town or, if you have elected to be cremated, you may grant permission that some of your ashes are stored or buried in both locations.

The decision for your final resting place is yours, however it is imperative it is clearly stipulated.

Other special handling requests:

“Allow your loved ones to integrate their loss of you into their life and continue the bond with you in new and lasting ways”

Notification to Your Family and Friends

I would like the following people to be personally notified directly of my passing (list the name, contact number, and their relationship to you, as well as the person you choose to make these phone calls):

Whilst you may have your funeral service announced publicly, it is imperative your closest loved ones, friends and colleagues are notified of your passing, as well as distant relatives so they can prepare to travel to your funeral service with sufficient warning. Preparing a list significantly expedites this process. You can build and amend this list as people enter or leave your life, to ensure it's as up to date for your inevitability.

You may have friends, old school friends, past relations and former work colleagues that your Next of Kin may not be familiar with, so listing all the people meaningful to you, will ease this burden for your loved ones and ensure your passing does not miss anyone who was significant during your life and you to theirs. Death ends a life not a relationship. It is imperative everyone is given the opportunity to say their goodbyes.

I would like my funeral service announced in the following print and/or on-line publications/locations:

If you are known by a number of people who may not be included in personal notifications of your passing then an announcement of your death is appropriate to ensure all your relatives, friends, constituents, associates and colleagues are informed. If you have lived in various cities or even countries, you may wish to consider publishing a public notification in various local papers and/or on-line (social media sites) reaching all your past connections in a timely manner to make arrangements to attend your funeral service or send their condolences to your family and loved ones.

“Death is the occasion, but obituaries are about life” (J. Y. Smith)

Your Obituary

I would like an obituary to be published:

No:

Yes, with the following details:

In the following publications:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

An Obituary can vary from comprising of a summation of your life chartered in chronological order such as your birth date and place, university, career experiences and life milestones, or a more poetic celebration of your life. Either way it should be a reflection of the person you are.

If you decide to publish an Obituary you may wish to nominate who creates your Obituary or consider drafting one yourself which merely needs to be updated or amended at the time of your passing. At the very least by providing a few dot points or highlights you wish included in your Obituary will make it more meaningful, accurate and alleviate the burden from the person you nominate writing your Obituary from scratch during an emotional and challenging time.

If your Obituary is written by another, it will generally be a tribute reflecting how you impacted the lives of loved ones and friends, celebrating your life and mourning your passing.

Typically the date and location and possibly the cause of your passing is included. If you do not wish your cause of death to be disclosed publicly you should specify. Similarly if there is a life event, a specific incident relationship or something you do not want included in your Obituary, that should be clearly referenced.

If you write your Obituary you can include an account of your life, paying tribute to those who have meaningfully touched you. Writing your Obituary it is an opportunity for you to reflect and reminisce about your life (to date) and be one less task your loved ones will need to consider. The time and effort you invest may become an inspiration towards compiling your memoirs commemorating your life for future generations to appreciate.

Either way your Obituary should be published a few days before your funeral service including details of the time and location of your memorial service and any requests relating to charitable donations in your memory or in lieu of floral arrangements as well as any specific themed preferences or requests for your attending guests.

Your Life, Your Words, ensuring you are Never Forgotten Your Way.

“Grief is the price we pay for love” (Queen Elizabeth II)

Guidelines for Writing Your Obituary

Commence drafting your Obituary by writing one sentence that you feel summarizes your life. The best way to be remembered in death is how you were remembered in life. This is a powerful way to capture the essence of you. Personalize your words. It may be a short phrase, quote, saying or even a metaphor. For example you may say, “ I always liked the old adage if you give it out in slices it comes back in loaves and I feel that best summarizes my life”. Or you may begin with “I did it my way. I say that because throughout my life”. Perhaps you have a signature song you would like to mention or a line from a favorite poem, verse, hymn, scripture or piece of prose. Start with the end in mind.

Compile a list of a few important milestones in your life. You may gain inspiration from looking at photographs and establish a timeline of your life. Select 3 or 4 significant turning points or occasions you would like to highlight. Perhaps graduating from university, the birth of your child, completing a marathon, getting married, receiving a career accolade, reaching a goal or other honorable achievement.

Perhaps you may prefer to share your spiritual growth such as your life values and life lessons. Recall the last time you had a big laugh or cry with a loved one? You may wish to share that moment. People will resonate to a real-life story or event triggering their fond memories of you and your time with them.

Share what your life means to you and the people who have impacted positively in your life. What brings meaning, value and purpose to your life?

What are your core values that guide your approach to life and how you wish them to be expressed?

What personal traits and achievements are you most proud of that you would like people to remember (or continued as your legacy in memoriam)?

Who have you loved and who has supported you? How can that best be recognized?

What quality about you would you like to be remembered and immortalized?

What would be left unsaid or undone if you passed unexpectedly?

What have you dedicated your time to throughout your life?

What characteristics are unique about you? What makes you different? How would those closest to you, describe you?

Use your own words, talk openly, honestly and with kind regard.

Select a photo you would like to be remembered by and ensure a copy is available in electronic format (saved on a DVD, CD or USB) along with your Never Forgotten documentation. Your Obituary along with all your specified requests will be implemented at the appointed time in harmony with your wishes.

Expressing your thoughts and feelings will be comforting words for your remaining loved ones and provide relatable ever-lasting memories. This selfless and thoughtful act will provide you with a sense of relief and inner peace knowing the things important to you in life will be remembered in death.

Tip: check the spelling of names, accuracy of dates and ensure it is proofread.

“Champion the freedom to make personal choices in dying. At the end of life, freedom and dignity will reflect you did it your way.”

Your Funeral Plan

I already have a pre-arranged funeral plan (or private insurance plan/ funeral bond) **arranged with the following funeral home or funeral director** (include name, contact number, policy numbers – attach copies to this document where possible):

Indicate any payments towards your pre-arranged funeral including amounts and dates paid:

In a perfect world our loved ones wouldn't spend any time deciding what to do when we are near death if everyone prepared a Never Forgotten document choices would be clear. Facing our own mortality takes strength, courage and the emotional reserves to deal with its intensity.

Unfortunately most people haven't taken time to plan for their eventuality and a Last Will and Testament does not typically make provisions towards planning for all the facets of this inevitable event. And yet we spend weeks, often months planning a wedding, holiday, children's christenings, even our retirement.

A funeral plan is essential if you wish to be remembered your way and alleviate your family from the burden of making extraneous decisions during a time of bereavement. You may also take measures to protect your social media and digital assets, as well as time to scribe loving messages to your loved ones and friends before it is too late.

If all your preferences for your final arrangements are not formalized, one of your survivors, sometimes determined by law, will be awarded the decision-making responsibility, such as your spouse, partner, child, parent, or Next of Kin, or possibly an officer of the court, typically in that order.

Dismissing the opportunity to specify your preferences may cause undue stress to your loved ones whilst they are grieving and not in a rationale frame of mind to make logical decisions in your best interests. In the absence of your funeral plan your family are forced to make important decisions within short time frames whilst in an elevated emotional state. This is not conducive to a positive final outcome and may unnecessarily cause disagreements amongst family members. Surviving loved ones may also be feeling vulnerable during this time of immense grief and sorrow and funeral service costs may not be controlled.

One of the most significant decisions you can make is how you wish to be finally disposed as well as nominating your preferred funeral home, funeral director, crematorium or final resting place (after comparing prices). You may pre-pay towards your funeral service and/or elements required, such as a headstone, burial plot, however consider the possibility that a manufacturer/supplier/vendor may become insolvent in future years and your investment lost. An established funeral home will be able to provide considered advice towards forward planning for your eventuality.

Other viable options are funeral payment funds which can be arranged through an insurance company and funeral bonds. Your funeral home/funeral director will be able to provide realistic costings based on your funeral service wishes, controlling costs and providing your family with clear directives regarding expenditure. All the information a Funeral home requires is in your completed Never Forgotten guide.

You may benefit from a "Guaranteed" funeral – where the funeral home guarantees to provide the services you select for the amount of money in your account and any future price increases are waived. A "Non-Guaranteed" funeral provides the items and services you selected, at the rates being charged at the time of your funeral service where costs are likely to be significantly higher, depending on how early you plan your funeral service in relation to the time of your final act. Principle and interest of your account will be applied to the total charges. If this amount does not cover the expenses, your estate will be charged the difference. If the amount of your account is greater than your funeral costs, the excess money will be refunded to your estate for distribution to your nominated beneficiaries.

Planning for your eventuality makes sense. It doesn't matter when you do it, but it matters that you do.

I would like the following person/s to be responsible for making my funeral arrangements (name/s and contact number/s):

Funeral arrangements do not need to be rushed. In fact, they should not be rushed. Grief will not disappear once the funeral is over. Depending on the religion or culture of the deceased, funerals are generally held on the third day following a death. If an autopsy or post-mortem is not requested, nor repatriation of the deceased from another country or state, this is the traditional departure timeframe for many cultures.

For grieving family members this is not a lot of time to organize funeral arrangements from scratch. Your specified preferences, requests and wishes will be a source of comfort, direction and assistance for your family during one of their greatest times of need.

Concentrating and completing even minor tasks is difficult when in a stressed state. Trying to remember names, recall dates and other pertinent details of your life could prove challenging for your loved ones during this emotionally challenging time. The funeral service is a very important part of grieving and providing loved ones closure. It is your once-in-a-lifetime chance to farewell others and be remembered your way. Your service should be as unique as the person you are.

In the event this person is incapable or unavailable then my next preference is (take into consideration if you nominate your spouse or close friend, they could be with you and also pass, for example a tragic accident):

“Death is inevitable: dying concludes our journey on this earth. We only die once”

Your Pre-disposition Ceremony

I would like one or more gatherings/ceremonies to occur prior to my final disposition (such as a visitation, viewing, formal or an informal gathering):

No:

Yes, with the following details:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

A Pre-disposition Ceremony is an event or gathering which occurs before you are either buried or cremated. This may include a private gathering where guests are afforded an opportunity to express their sympathies to your family and loved ones in an intimate setting. You may elect a viewing or visitation prior to, or as part of, your funeral service allowing attendees to express their final goodbyes and farewells face-to-face.

These ceremonies differ from a “final disposition ceremony” which occurs either at the burial or cremation, or afterwards, for example a wake or the ceremonial scattering or burying of ashes.

You can specify any number of gatherings and ceremonies (pre and/or post) of your funeral service. It is usually a collaborative decision reflecting both your personal preferences and/or your cultural or religious beliefs. In most modern societies, the primary ceremony prior to burial or cremation is the funeral service. Particularly if a funeral is likely to have a large guest attendance, a pre-disposition ceremony allows the closest of the deceased survivors say their goodbyes in a quieter, more private environment.

Generally a registration book is signed at any and all ceremonies and gatherings as a record of attendees, along with sympathy messages from your guests. If you do not wish a registry present or have other specific requests include all your preferences to ensure they are implemented in harmony with your wishes.

“I know death has ten thousand several doors for people to take their exits” (John Webster)

Your Final Disposition

How do you wish to be disposed?

Death rituals have existed since our beginnings. The decision of how you would like your physical body to be disposed may be influenced by family tradition, cultural values and religious beliefs. But in the end, this personal, individual decision is yours. The pen that writes Your story must be held in Your hand.

If you have an existing grave or cremation deed specify the cemetery or crematorium details (including name of deed holder and deed number):

Buried underground (in a coffin/casket, grave liner or vault in a cemetery plot with a grave marker or monument) **in a cemetery or in a memorial park:**

Burial Service – In a cemetery plot, coffin/casket, grave liner or vault with a grave marker or monument. Your burial service can incorporate a viewing or visitation of your body before transportation to the place of burial, typically in a cemetery or memorial park. A cemetery offers upright/vertical markers and monuments or memorials (horizontal) flush to the ground or on stone bases, whereas memorial parks only offer markers (horizontal) flush to the ground or on stone bases creating a garden park-type environment.

Buried above ground (entombed in a coffin/casket or mausoleum) or buried at sea:

Entombment – Either above ground in a coffin/casket placed in a tomb, vault, mausoleum or other type of crypt.

Burials at Sea – If seeking to arrange your burial at sea you will require a sea dumping permit. The regulations vary depending on the country the sea burial is to be held. For example, in Australia these burials are regulated under the Sea Dumping Act, administered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. A permit is only a requirement for the disposition of a body, but not required for ashes buried at sea or scattered in the ocean.

Permits are generally only granted to those with a pre-determined connection to the sea, such as navy personnel or fishermen. The most difficult task in arranging a sea burial is locating an appropriate burial site which is generally a long distance offshore. This is because the site must not be in conflict with other marine users (e.g. shipping, trawling) and typically be at a minimum depth of 3000 metres.

Sea burials must be in accordance to the Ship Captain's Medical Guide to ensure the body is properly handled for example not embalmed but sewn into a shroud (not in a coffin or casket). The shroud needs to be made of a strong material and weighted to ensure rapid sinking and permanent submersion of the body.

Cremated:

When a body is cremated it involves a heat process which reduces the remains to ash (and some bone fragments called "cremains") in an oven-like device called a "retort". The entire process takes 2–3 hours. Your ashes can be stored in an urn and buried or entombed in a cemetery/memorial park or a "columbarium", a niche in wall or room where urns are placed as permanent memorials. Alternatively, your ashes can be given to a loved one to be kept at home, or scattered on land or over water, depending on local government laws. Cremation is regarded a more environmentally friendly means of body disposition.

Cryogenically Preserved:

Cryogenics is a perfusion option gradually cooling your body to minus 196 degrees centigrade and immersed in liquid nitrogen in a protective cryostat, in the hope that medical science may one day be able to revive the deceased. This is a far greater costly disposition option and electing to be cryogenically preserved prohibits the donation of your body or any of your organs or tissue.

Home Funerals:

Another consideration may include a Home Funeral when the service and burial of the deceased is held on a private property. Home burials can be conducted with the assistance of a funeral director, celebrant or clergy adhering to State and Local Health and Safety Regulations, which will vary depending on the country the Home Funeral is held. Typically a minimum acreage requirement at the location forms part of local laws or legislation. Many home burials are natural or “green” burials that do not require embalming, do not use biodegradable coffins/caskets or burial shrouds and eliminate the need for burial vaults and liners.

Green Burials:

These burials consume fewer resources, reduce the use of carcinogenic chemicals such as formaldehyde contained in embalming fluids, conserves land and preserves wildlife. Cemeteries require acres of land often stripped of trees and natural vegetation and usually require the use of chemicals for weed control and fertilizers to maintain the grounds. A Green Burial is an environmentally-friendly predisposition option.

Sky Burials:

In some cultures, such as Buddhism, it is common practice to place the deceased’s body on high ground, such as a mountain, for birds to dispose of the remains. Some religions view birds of prey as carriers of the soul to the heavens.

Military Funerals:

Typically a unique set of traditions including the draping of the flag, firing of a salute and playing of a bugle call is incorporated in Military Funerals. If you have served in the military or armed forces the details of country, branch, name of the regiment/unit under which you served, service/serial number, current rank or rank at discharge (and date and place of discharge), details/dates of medals/awards/honors bestowed upon you should be clearly outlined.

Depending on the country the military service is being held, the cost of the service is covered partially or entirely by the country in which you have served, typically provided by the Ministry (or Department) of Defence. Repatriation costs, if required, may not be covered however dependant on the country you request as your final resting place.

Viewing:

Consideration may be given regarding having a viewing or visitation of your body prior to your Final Disposition incorporated regardless of whether you choose a burial or cremation disposition service.

Viewing of the deceased in a calm and tranquil setting can be therapeutic and assist the bereaved to directly face the reality of the passing of their loved one, possibly helping gain closure. Some people appreciate the opportunity to see the deceased one final time, to reflect and express their private goodbyes before other funeral guests are present; whereas others may wish to hold onto their former living memories of their deceased loved one. Therefore, the decision regarding specifying a viewing is not an easy one, however a compromise could be to consider a viewing with the provision that those who do not wish to participate in your viewing ceremony you respectfully understand and accept their decision not to be in attendance.

Furthermore your decision for a viewing may depend on the age and circumstances at the time of your departure, whether you are in good health or suffering from an illness. Therefore, you may elect to nominate a viewing dependent on certain conditions or consider providing variables to a loved one so their decision based on your specified criteria at the time of your passing. You may re-visit your viewing decision in your more senior years to ensure your choice is still synergistic with your preferred wishes. Embalming your body upon death can be beneficial, although not a requirement in preparation of a viewing.

Other:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Your Final Disposition decision is a sensitive one and you may need time considering, no doubt influenced by your own preferences, cultural and spiritual beliefs, family tradition and religious background. If you have a particular religious denomination or specific requests, such as a Requiem Mass, clearly outline your preferences to avoid confusion and any possible disagreements amongst your family members.

For example, Orthodox Jews shroud their dead and bury them on the same day as passing, while Buddhists believe that consciousness stays in the body for three days. Hindus are cremated, because it's believed that burning releases the soul from the body, while Roman Catholics typically disregard cremation out of respect for the body which is a symbol of human life. Your choice is personal and as individual as you.

*“The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone”
(Harriet Beecher Stowe)*

List the names of Your Next of Kin or loved ones you provide authority to obtain a copy of your Death Certificate from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages:

At the time of your burial or cremation, your death is registered with Births, Deaths and Marriages and a Certificate of Death or Death Certificate or Medical Certificate of Death is issued. This is often a necessary document for any estate and legal issues to be finalized. Applications for a copy of a Death Certificate can only be made at the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and depending on the country, typically must be accompanied by a minimum of three forms of identification. This ensures your privacy is maintained and your private information is only released to those entitled. It is recommended you check the Judicial and State Laws depending on which state or country you reside, as law regulations are constantly being amended.

“The first impression and the final impression matters”

Your Final Appearance

Regardless of whether you have specified an open coffin/casket or viewing/visitation, you may wish to describe details regarding how you picture yourself during your last presentation. Primary preferences may be what you envisage yourself wearing for your ultimate departure, the way your hair is styled such as for a male whether he wishes to be wearing his toupee, jewellery and make-up, for example ladies may have a favorite lipstick color. You may wish to also identify specific items you wish placed in your coffin/casket for your final disposition (this is particularly important for those who believe in the Afterlife).

You may also have a type and/or color of flower which holds meaning to you for resting on top of your coffin or casket, or positioned on the stage during the presentation or reading of your eulogy. Perhaps you have a particular photo you wish visibly displayed at your service, wake or other post-funeral gatherings or ceremonies, featured as a complimentary reminder of you during a happy time in your life. It is critical to provide as many details as possible, enabling your family to honor your requests in harmony with your wishes.

One of the main decisions which cause family disagreements is what to dress their loved one in for their funeral service and final farewell, particularly women deciding an outfit or dress for the deceased of a female loved one – a mother, sister, grandmother, aunt or daughter. To mitigate any unnecessary emotional stress during your loved one’s time of grief, provide clear guidance to your preferences to remove all the guess work.

If and particulars are of little importance to you, by simply citing you have no preferences, relieves the family of this burden, given you have clearly indicated it has no significance to you. Alternatively, you may indicate you don’t mind what choice is made, with the exception of a particular item of clothing or hair style. This will ensure they do not select something you do not feel appropriate for your final rest.

You may wish to only specify a few preferences, such as whether you would like to be wearing your eye glasses or buried with your wedding ring or a family heirloom. Regardless you should be as specific as possible to avoid any confusion, particularly if it is meaningful to you. For example, if you elect to be buried with your wedding ring, indicate if your preference is to be wearing it, holding it or simply placed on you. If you specify an item of jewellery also indicate if you wish it to be removed after the ceremony and before your final disposition to be bequeathed to another, or if you wish it remains with you eternally.

Other items symbolic of you may incorporate a walking stick, a pipe, favorite gadget, a photo of your family, car or beloved pet, a book, letter from someone special to you or an award/medal/an accolade meaningful to you.

Clothing preference (or anything with the exception of a specific piece of clothing you do not wish to be wearing for your ultimate departure):

Any Specific Clothing details:

Styling of Hair / Make-up preference:

Jewellery preference (indicate if wish to be buried with your jewellery, any sentimental jewellery items or family heirlooms or wear it only for the ceremony but removed prior to your final disposition to be bequeathed to another):

Jewellery details:

Special items to be placed in the coffin or with my body (your only limitation is space):

Frank Sinatra had a bottle of whiskey, a Zippo lighter, and ten dimes put into his casket — in case he needed to make a phone call.

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

If you do not have a preference, your family will either decide for you, or you will be dressed in a manner deemed suitable of your religious denomination (where relevant) for your funeral service. For example, for men this often consists of a suit and tie.

Any information you are able to provide will only reduce this decision-making burden from your family and guarantee your final departure reflects everything you want and equally important, nothing you don't.

“A dying person needs to die, as a sleepy person needs to sleep and there comes a time when it is wrong, as well as useless to resist” (Stewart Alsop)

Your Coffin/Casket

I already have a preferred coffin/casket, stored at the following location (company name, address, phone number, model, type, color, any pre-paid details, if applicable):

The type of coffin/casket I would prefer is:

- **Fibreboard**
- **Pine**
- **Oak**
- **Cherry wood**
- **Walnut wood**
- **Willow wood**
- **Painted wood (specific color)**
- **Basic**
- **Steel**
- **Stainless steel**
- **Copper**
- **Bronze**
- **Silver**
- **Gold**
- **None**
- **No casket only a cloth/shroud**

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

The level of expenditure purchasing my coffin/casket I would prefer is (minimal cost, average cost, a medium to high end purchase, or an extravagant expenditure):

Any additional details about your coffin / casket to ensure your loved ones are not in the dark regarding your preferences, particularly regarding your preferred level of expenditure (perhaps you believe a coffin is symbolic, a statement gesture of your final resting place and therefore no expenses spared or you are comfortable with a more practical casket):

Your coffin or casket is the container in which your body will be buried or cremated. They vary in appearance and range vastly in prices. A coffin is just as functional as a “box” prior to cremation or ornate for a viewing or burial. Coffins do not preserve a body, they simply provide a dignified final resting place.

Pre-selecting your coffin (or at the very least expressing your preferences) relieves a significant burden from your loved ones, particularly given the extreme diversity in prices which may divide vulnerable, grieving family members between wanting to provide you with the best but not frivolously spending estate funds bequeathed to your nominated recipient such as your children or charities.

It is generally not a good idea to pre-pay for a coffin or casket as it may be many years before it is required and possible within that timeframe your manufacturer/supplier/vendor goes out of business and becomes insolvent, whereby your pre-paid investment is lost. There are funeral bonds or several funeral insurance funds to plan towards pre-paying funeral expenses or an established funeral home will provide considered advice towards your desires to plan in advance for your eventuality.

Most funeral homes offer lined coffins that can be rented during the viewing or visitation of the body or funeral service, in lieu of purchase, which is ideal for a cremation service. However many families are not aware of this significant cost-saving option and during a vulnerable time, coming to grips with their loss and therefore experiencing impaired logic they are unlikely to be in a negotiating state of mind.

There are also coffin makers who specialize in manufacturing a one-off, customize coffin tailored to your personal wishes. These one-off, designer coffins are a significantly more expensive option.

Selecting the materials and features for your preferred type of coffin/casket, as well as the type of floral arrangement resting on top of your coffin, all forms another expression of you and a symbolism of your life.

“I shall not die of a cold. I shall die of having lived” (Willa Cather)

Your Cremation Witness

I would like to have my cremation witnessed:

No:

Yes, by anybody:

Yes, by the following person/s:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

A cremation witness/es can be appointed to oversee the cremation process. This can be a difficult role, but some people are concerned that the cremated remains produced by the crematorium may not be entirely from their body. Not all crematoriums allow witnesses, so if having someone present at your cremation service is important to you specify in accordance with your wishes.

Some funeral homes have a viewing window where invited Next of Kin and other loved ones are able to witness your cremation transpire. Other options available at most funeral homes include a closing of a curtain or sliding of a screen to remove the view of your coffin/casket from the funeral attendees towards the end of a funeral service, usually whilst music is playing, symbolizing your final departure from this realm. These are all considerations you may wish to express should you choose to be cremated following your passing.

“The boundaries between life and death are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where one ends and where the other begins” (Edgar Allen Poe)

Disposition of Your Ashes

Following your cremation, what would you like done with your cremated remains “cremains” or “ashes”?

How your ashes are handled is a very personal decision and your religious beliefs, family traditions or cultural preferences may influence your decision. For example, typically Catholics prefer a burial or permanent storage of their ashes, whereas some other Christian denominations regard Mother Earth as holy ground and therefore scattering ashes symbolizes the body being returned to Earth.

How you wish to dispose of your ashes and the location should be a special place of particular relevance and meaningful to you, such as a garden, forest, a beach, favorite meeting place, scattered from a mountain or in the ocean. Perhaps you may nominate for your ashes to be placed in an urn and passed onto your loved ones or placed in a memorial. You may decide on more than one option proportioning your ashes to accommodate several resting place options. Regardless of your preference it is imperative you specify to ensure your loved ones can honor your wishes.

I have a pre-arranged burial plot or entombment niche for my ashes, at the following location (name, address, plot/niche number):

Buried (specify location and any requests):

- **In a private burial site** *There is no law forbidding the burial of ashes on private land*
- **In a cemetery**
- **In a churchyard**
- **In a memorial garden or my own garden/land**
- **In a green burial ground**
- **In a mausoleum** (entombed)
- **In a farmer's field/land**
- **At sea** (immersed underwater as opposed to scattered over the ocean)
- **At my favorite lookout point**
- **In my homeland**
- **Other location** (specify)

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

If your preference is an unusual request or a property privately owned by another, it would be advisable to seek the land owner's permission or speak with local authorities before you nominate this burial site as your preferred final resting place to alleviate the burden from your family trying to honor your wishes for a location which may not be allowed or approved.

To avoid this scenario and any associated stress to your family, in the event your first preference is not viable, you could nominate your next preferred option so instructions are clear for an alternate solution.

Stored above ground:

If you decide to store your ashes, you need to choose a designated columbarium, which is a permanent memorial, typically a room or a wall with niches to house cremation urns in perpetuity or alternatively, a memorial garden.

Scattered over land or water:

If you elect for your ashes to be scattered over land or at sea, you should cite whom you wish to release your ashes (or if you wish to nominate more than one person, for example each of your immediate family members and/or close friends) and your specific desired location. Cite any preferences such as, scattered via aircraft or if at sea from a boat, surfboard, jet ski or any other handling preferences. If you have a particular favorite time of the day (eg sunrise or sunset), day of the week and/or a significant date (such as your birthday or an anniversary) these preferences need to be included.

If you desire other sentimental gestures or rituals transpiring during your ashes scattering ceremony, it is pertinent you clarify. For example, “I want my ashes scattered off the (name) beach into the ocean along with a dozen long stemmed white roses” or “I want my ashes buried under my favorite maple tree on my property (the one near the goat shed) while the song titled Over The Rainbow is playing”.

The more specific you are about your vision for your final resting place the more likely your wishes can be honored and avoid family members disputing the details during an already very emotional time.

Given to a relative / friend (nominate person, contact details and relation to you):

You may wish to consider a family member or friend becoming the custodian of your ashes, housed safely at their home or holiday house. An arrangement with the crematorium must ensue nominating the person your ashes are to be released following your cremation. This is a requirement regardless of your post-disposition choice – whether you bury or scatter your ashes or bequeath to a loved one.

If someone is retaining your ashes, consider where you want them stored or passed to another when he/she passes away. Perhaps given to another or the custodian’s Next of Kin. You may elect to have your ashes buried (or stored) alongside their ashes or remains, if they are buried, when their time eventuates or, leave this decision up to your surviving family members. A succession plan for your ashes should be cited.

Lastly, you may decide on a combination of directives, for example, a portion of your ashes scattered (or buried) and some of your ashes retained to be given to loved ones to cherish. All that matters is your preferences are your own for your final resting place to eventuate.

“Your end, which is endless, as a snowflake dissolving in the pure air”

Storing Your Ashes

I already have a container I would like used, stored at the following location:

The container I would like for my ashes to be stored is in a:

- **Standard urn**
- **Bronze urn**
- **Silver urn**
- **Gold urn**
- **Wooden urn**
- **China urn**
- **Crystal urn**
- **Marble urn**
- **Home-made urn**
- **Box (specify)**
- **Other (specify)**

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Any additional details about the container:

The crematorium usually returns your Ashes to a family member in a small, inexpensive plastic or cardboard container. There are no real restrictions on the container you choose to store your Ashes, however if you elect permanent storage at a columbarium there may be size constraints to be considered.

Specifying your preferences ensures your loved ones arrange a time to collect your Ashes and obtain them in advance of the burial or scattering or distribution ceremony of your Ashes.

"Our death is not an end if we can live on in our children and the younger generation. For they are us, our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life" (Albert Einstein)

Your Pallbearers

Yes, I would like to have my coffin/casket carried by specific Pallbearers:

The names of my nominated Pallbearers include:

The names of my nominated Honorary Pallbearers are:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Your coffin/casket is likely to be carried to and from your ceremony depending on your funeral arrangements. For example, from your funeral service location to the transportation vehicle to your burial site/crematorium or final resting location. Due to the weight of your coffin/casket a minimum of eight people will be required to perform the honorable task of being your Pallbearer. These people are typically immediate family, close relatives, special friends or work colleagues.

Your Pallbearers can be appointed by you or you can leave this decision up to your loved ones. A funeral home may also provide Pallbearers if required. Being selected as a person's Pallbearer is one of the highest honors that can be bestowed upon a family member or close friend. If they understand that you specified them as the person of your choosing during life, the honor is even greater and far more meaningful. Alternatively, your loved ones will be left with the decision to be made on your behalf.

If you wish to select your Pallbearers you may also nominate a couple of "back-up" people in the event someone is incapable (due to injury), unwell or unavailable on the day. Extreme height variations amongst Pallbearers may require a substitute person. You may also elect "Honorary Pallbearers" which is a title typically for somebody who is aged, or find the role of being a Pallbearer too physically or emotionally challenging. Typically the names of your Pallbearers and Honorary Pallbearers are listed in your Funeral Service Booklet or Program.

“Death – the last sleep? No, it is the final awakening” (Walter Scott)

Your Transportation

I would like my body to be transported in:

- **A hearse**
- **A stretch limousine**
- **My own car**
- **A friend’s car**
- **A large estate car**
- **A horse-drawn carriage**
- **No preference**
- **Other (specify)**

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

I would like my family to be transported in:

- **A hearse**
- **A stretch limousine**
- **My own car**
- **A friend’s car**
- **A large estate car**
- **A horse-drawn carriage**
- **No preference**
- **Other (specify)**

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Another form of personal expression symbolic of the person you are is the transportation of your coffin/casket to your funeral service, cemetery, crematorium or other nominated location. Your choice of transportation for you and your family is an extension of how you wish your final farewell to be remembered, adding substance to the memory of you for your guests and funeral attendees to savour.

“You were born an original. Don’t die a copy” (John Mason)

Your Funeral Service

The purpose of a funeral service is to give meaning to a person’s life and provide remaining family and friends an opportunity to pay their respects and their final farewells to the deceased towards gaining closure.

Many funerals are not personalized. They are a structured, standardized format which some consider “cookie-cutter”. We were all born an original and most people would rather not die a copy, instead be celebrated and remembered for their unique qualities and individual characteristics.

People often express the burden to attend funerals which they feel is merely a sense of responsibility or obligation. However being able to participate in the expression of the final farewell to someone you cared about and reminded of their precious memories during their life and their contributions to the lives of others, should be a cherished moment and a privilege to attend. The more personalized your funeral service, the more memorable and enriching it will be for your loved ones and funeral service guests.

The ultimate aim is to build your farewell that speaks to the person you are by making decisions thoughtfully and while you can, with dignity. It doesn’t take a fatalistic person to recognize the value in planning their funeral service in advance because every person has a unique life and unique life story.

Most religions have one or more funeral traditions, for example Christians, Protestants generally holds a service within several days of passing at a church followed by a burial service performed by a Minister at a cemetery, memorial park or funeral home. Whereas Buddhist funerals are generally in a temple or funeral home with a single day or night to view the deceased’s body followed by a service conducted by a Buddhist monk where attendees typically wear white.

Regardless of your cultural beliefs or religious denomination it is extremely important your funeral service is a personalized tribute accurately reflecting, celebrating and honoring your life. Research has proven a tailored funeral service will always stand out in the minds of the attendees and assist them during a time of bereavement.

You may be of the view your spouse, partner, children or a friend is capable of knowing you well enough to make all the necessary decisions correctly on your behalf. However, apart from leaving them pressured to make the right choices, whilst they may know your happiest moments, or your preference in music it is unlikely they will definitively know all your preferences and desires.

Furthermore the loved one you nominate and rely on to decide may actually pass away before you, along with all their knowledge of you. It is recommended you do not leave something so significant to chance. By investing a few hours citing your preferences you will gain peace of mind knowing your legacy will live on in memory forever the way you wish to be remembered. Regret is a painful thing, especially when it can be avoided.

By choosing the songs, poems, passages, prose, hymns, photos, momentos and other personalized preferences, your tailored funeral service will be an empowering, enriching farewell tribute.

As your loved ones, family members, friends and work colleagues recognize a signature expression of you it will provide them with a great sense of comfort during a difficult and fragile time. Your attendees will be better equipped to walk away from your service drawing strength from the reminders of their fondest memories of you and your life. This will assist them to move on without you in their life creating a powerful shift from your physical presence to one based on their memories of you.

There are many decisions you can incorporate into your funeral service to make it as unique as you are and by doing so you are not only reducing stress from your family but furnishing your loved ones with the greatest gift at their greatest time of need. Your personal goodbye will allow your loved ones to integrate their loss of you into their life and continue their bond with you in new and lasting ways.

One example of common funeral choices are the songs and hymns typically played during the service. Whilst the songs titled “Amazing Grace” and “(Oh) Danny Boy” are appropriate, there are millions of songs you can choose to ensure the music played at your service is meaningful to you.

Most people select the music, poems, flowers, dress code, format proceedings and theme for their wedding, christenings, milestone birthday gatherings, why wouldn't we invest the same effort, thought and personal touches for our final and ultimate departure? Our last chance to provide a final expression of the person we are at the most critical time of our life – just like first impressions, last impressions also matter.

However many funeral services follow the same format incorporating the same handful of “template” songs, hymns, prose, readings and prayers. This may be because family are making decisions within relatively short time frames whilst grieving for their loss. When people are forced to make logical decisions during a time of sorrow with impaired thinking it is inevitable the outcome is less than desirable.

The pressure to make all the right decisions on behalf of the deceased may even cause family disagreements and costs may not be controlled. All of which can be mitigated with your final wishes and preferences being clearly expressed, alleviating stress from your loved ones and removing all the guess work.

The main messages most people want reflected at their funeral service is to simply say “Goodbye” and “I love you”. However first you need to be able to say “I” and decide what is most meaningful to you to express your final farewell to reflect the person you are. What do “I” really want to convey? At the end of the road, what do “I” value the most out of life? What final wishes do “I” want cherished and memories “I” most want to be remembered to reflect the individual “I” am? How do “I” want to be revered for future generations.

Now is the time to discover what is essential to you in living and in dying. After all while dying, life is distilled down to the essential. Don't wait for that inevitable day, begin deciding now what is essential to you.

Would you like your funeral service open to anybody or only family and friends?

Are there any specific people you would like to ensure are in attendance at your funeral service. Equally important indicate any person/s you would like excluded from attending your funeral and any of your pre or post ceremonies or gatherings?

Indicate if you wish children to attend your funeral:

Yes:

No with the exception of: (my children, grandchildren, babies and/or any child under the age of _____ years *nominate the age*):

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

The death of a family member can be a very confusing experience for children, however their attendance may allow the child, children, or grandchildren realize the finality of death and share in the emotional experience with their family. Children should be encouraged to express sorrow in their own way and possibly decide if they wish to attend your funeral. If they choose to be present a conversation with the child and a loved one should transpire to prepare them for what they are likely to experience, what they can expect to see and hear at your farewell service.

Depending on the individual child and their circumstances, such as their age, maturity and relationship to you, perhaps you may leave it to the child's parent to make this decision or you may decide to specify you do not wish any children attending your funeral service. By ensuring your preference is clear disappointment as well as any possible family disagreements are more likely to be avoided, during this sorrowful and emotionally charged time.

What tone/mood would you like your funeral service to be? (A formal or an informal gathering, a serious somber affair or an uplifting celebration, elaborate or simple):

Would you like a theme introduced to your service or specific dress requirement for attendees? For example attendees are invited to wear something with a splash of your favorite color, specific flower or follow a theme.

You may request your guests bring an item reminiscent of you to your funeral service (or to your post-funeral service gathering, such as your wake). Items such as a photo of you, a gift or card you may have given them, a poem as an expression of you, a much-loved book or something iconic to reflect your passions, hobbies, sporting or other interests. These items will create discussion points amongst your guests and stimulate memorable, funny, touching stories about you and how you impacted on their lives as well as your life's contribution to others.

People may learn something about you they did not know. This reflective sharing experience will help your guests draw strength from each other during this poignant, memorable gathering to build their final memories of you. Afterall, death ends a life not a relationship.

Is there an individual you would like to lead your ceremony – a particular priest, clergy, celebrant, perhaps a special friend or relative?:

“There are a million different ways to say goodbye, you deserve a funeral that is one in a million”

Elements of Your Special Goodbye

Are there any special hymns, psalms, songs or prayers that you would like to be spoken (*refer to the supplementary Guide book of songs, prayers, prose readings, psalms, hymns for suggestions or, nominate a favorite from your own collection*):

Would you like a memory table to display personal items unique to you? (This could include photos, family portraits, trophies/medals, musical instruments, hobby or sporting items, favorite hat, a special letter from a loved one or friend, or signature piece of clothing):

No:

Yes, including the following items:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Would you like a media presentation with photos of you played at your service? Consider something to make your service unique such as balloons released with messages from your loved ones, or doves or a ritual everyone is involved in on the day reflecting your wishes? (This includes a montage of photos throughout your life or a video with background to music):

No:

Yes, I have included this presentation on a CD/DVD/USB with this document:

Yes and photos I would like included and the song/s played are listed as follows:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

“Part of the human condition is the need to feel understood. What would you like others to understand about you?”

Your Last Message

I would like a final farewell message read to my family and friends:

No:

Yes, with the following details:

Preferred person to read your message (alternatively pre-recording this message to be played at your service would be an empowering accolade and memorable touch for your loved ones).

Include their name and contact detail and where either your written words or pre-recorded footage/vision can be obtained when the time is required. Store on a CD/DVD/USB with this document and leave another copy safely in a separate location, such as with a family member or friend, in the event of a fire.

A final goodbye message to your family and friends communicating your sentiments regarding how much they meant to you and words of comfort to the people who will miss you and be missed, is an opportunity to leave nothing unsaid.

Visualize your loved ones hearing your final farewell message, knowing they were penned by your hand and your last words ever to be spoken. Your words are likely to deliver great joy and potentially help them cope with their grief and gain closure.

The pen that writes Your story must be held in Your hand!

You may even consider pre-recording your last words to be played at your funeral service creating a moving tribute for your guests to hear the texture of your voice one last time and your messages of love. This would create a memorable, powerful and enriching ever-lasting final goodbye.

Words of wisdom, stories or lessons from your past or a special memory you sense your family may relate or enjoy re-living together or, you may simply let them know how much you love them and what you specifically appreciated about them. This compassionate gesture may be appreciated more than you will ever know!

We have all heard the words “I never had a chance to say goodbye” or “but I have been meaning to say...” or “If only I had a chance to say goodbye”, so this is your opportunity to ensure this does not apply to you. You will have the satisfaction of knowing you will Never be Forgotten.

In the words of Isaac Asimov, “If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn’t brood. I’d type a little faster.”

“The goal of all life is death” (Sigmund Freud)

Your Funeral Service Booklet / Funeral Program

I would like a Funeral Service Booklet distributed to attendees at my Funeral Service (specify if you would like it printed on recycled paper):

No:

Yes. A copy is attached with this document (either a hard copy or preferably electronic to allow the inclusion of details such as date of passing and funeral service location):

Yes. I want the following specific details mentioned and/or request particular elements or incidents of my life are excluded from my Funeral Service Booklet including:

I want a specific photo featured on the front cover (enclose a copy with this document, or save the photo to a CD/DVD/USB or describe the photo eg my wedding portrait, graduation portrait, a Facebook profile photo or one of my more recent photos and any other photos you wish included in your funeral booklet):

I would like a *Forever Legacy Portrait* option included on my Funeral Service Booklet distributed to attendees at my Funeral Service

No:

Yes. I would like all my Funeral Friends and those unable to attend my funeral service to receive a copy of the words and photos highlighted in my *Forever Legacy Portrait*.

I would like the following phrase, metaphor, saying, song verse, piece of prose or quotation included on the front cover of my funeral booklet (and any other words, phrases or sayings you wish to be included inside your funeral booklet):

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Your Funeral Service Booklet (or funeral program or a bookmark if you prefer) forms an important part of your final farewell. It is typically one of the last tangible keepsakes to remind family and friends of the significant impact you had on their lives.

Your Funeral Booklet is a summation of your life in chronological order charting your life eg birth date and place, where you grew up, university, employment history and highlights in your career, personal life and other experiences, milestones, achievements, accolades, honors and awards, hobbies, interests, your life passions, as well as biographical data and information about your final farewell (location and date). It is a momento reflecting the person you are and it would possibly hold a greater meaning to your guests if you were the author or at the very least provided a contribution towards the words and selection of photos.

If you decide to include a funeral booklet or program but not write it yourself, you may wish to nominate who you wish to compile it. Many funeral homes also offer the service to create funeral booklets or funeral programs with information provided from surviving family members. However you may consider drafting a few dot points or highlights you wish included in your funeral booklet making it more meaningful, accurate and alleviate the burden of the person you nominate attempting to write something from scratch during an emotional time.

This is also an opportunity for you clarify if you do not want a particular life moment, relationship or incident mentioned, as well as your preferences for the front cover photo of yourself and other pictures, quotes, metaphors, poems, sayings, prose, hymns and readings you wish incorporated.

The cover photo on your funeral service booklet is critical. It forms a lasting image of you etched in the minds of your guests. It should be chosen carefully and tastefully, ensuring no hands or limbs are cropped. A picture may paint a thousand words, but a photo evokes numerous memories.

“It is not length of life, but depth of life” (Emerson Ralph Waldo)

Guidelines for Writing Your Funeral Booklet

Your Funeral Service Booklet is a keepsake and it is typically the primary, sometimes only, physical item your funeral guests can cherish following your funeral service. Traditionally the Funeral Service Booklet provides certain information including (but not limited to):

Full name of the deceased

The deceased’s date of birth and date of passing

The funeral service, burial or cremation venue, date and time

Names of surviving family or relatives

Names of the Pallbearers and any Honorary Pallbearers

Presiding burial or cremation official, priest, celebrant, clergy or close friend

Names of the person/s reading the Eulogy (if yourself, then the name of the person introducing your pre-recorded Eulogy or reading your pre-written Eulogy on your behalf)

References and titles of readings, songs, psalms, scriptures, passages, hymns, inscriptions or poems

Photos of the deceased (sometimes at various stages of his or her life)

The deceased’s biography (if available) and their interests, hobbies, any life passions

Places of employment / career highlights, accolades, awards, medals, tributes, titles and honors

Messages of gratitude from family members, loved ones and close friends

However some families are electing to discard with the traditional funeral service booklet and provide guests with the deceased's information and photos saved to a DVD, CD, USB, website or web page and/or produce something practical people can use in their daily lives and remember the passing of their loved one such as a bookmark featuring critical dates, description of the deceased and a photo, calendar, fridge magnet, to name a few.

There are numerous template software programs available to construct a Funeral Service Booklet or Funeral Program including Apps, Word Processor, Apple iWorks, SmartDraw or Microsoft Publisher, as well as online templates to assist funeral program designs.

As a living reminder of a person who has passed, some individuals create a web page or website of all the information that would normally comprise in a funeral service program, which could incorporate a recorded message from the deceased, blogs, a photo slide show, videos (capturing childhood moments and lifetime milestones).

This digital life storyboard provides the capacity to be updated upon your passing and emailed (or sent via a drop box service) to people who were unable to attend your funeral and as a permanent keepsake for your loved ones to reflect upon in loving memory or share with future generations.

Tip: check the spelling of names, accuracy of dates and ensure it is proof read.

“You must have control of the authorship of your own destiny. The pen that writes your story must be held in your hand” (Irene C. Kassorla)

Your Eulogy

I would like a Eulogy delivered at my Funeral Service:

No:

Yes, and I would like it given by (name a person, their contact details and their relationship to you):

In the event they are incapable or unavailable your second choice should be specified. Furthermore if you feel comfortable, it would be advisable for you to ask that person/s beforehand, particularly if you feel they may decline so when your inevitable day arrives it will not come as a surprise.

Yes, and I would like to deliver my own Eulogy at my funeral service. A copy is stored (indicate location or company, person/s who have been provided with a copy and their contact details). **It could be filmed** (with you directly addressing your guests) **or a voice over recording** (with you speaking from the other realm – a powerful moment for all attendees. Whilst showing photos of you) **and saved onto a CD, DVD, USB or other electronic device** (Alternatively you may write your Eulogy to be read /delivered by someone your choose).
Specify all relevant decisions, details and requests:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

The Eulogy (or Tribute or Remembrance speech) is a farewell or memorial speech exemplifying what meaning, value and purpose was captured in a person's life. It pays tribute to the deceased, highlighting their uniqueness and acknowledging his or her significant meaning to others. The delivery of the Eulogy and the heart-felt words describing the deceased are generally considered the most personal part of a funeral service – the treasure chest of the heart.

Often referred to as Your Last Toast and also described as “the last swan song” or “your final hurrah”, the Eulogy is typically the “jewel in the crown” of any funeral service, commemorating and expressing final farewells to the deceased. There are many types of Eulogies.

Quite often the type of Eulogy depends largely on the person who delivers it and sets the tone for the funeral service proceedings such as formal or informal, a stoic tribute or a fun celebration. A husband would present a very different Eulogy than perhaps a son. A father would deliver a Eulogy than a deceased's brother.

Your Eulogy should reflect and celebrate the person you are whether that be funny, serious, poignant, sweet, romantic, witty, complex or someone who didn't take life too seriously. It is the ultimate and final expression of how you wish to be remembered.

Who better to deliver your Eulogy than yourself? Speaking directly to your loved ones after passing from this realm would be the ultimate powerful farewell ensuring you will be remembered your way and Never be Forgotten.

Imagine how meaningful your final spoken words would be to all your guests, whilst tangibly assisting them overcome their grief with the memory of your final comforting ever-lasting words delivered first-hand. Picture your future grandchildren and great grandchildren being able to “meet” you by watching your final farewell words. Pre-writing and recording your Eulogy also reduces the burden of a loved one to capture the right words to accurately honor your passing which can be daunting and challenging, particularly if they are emotionally crippled by their loss of you. Afterall, who else knows you better than yourself?

You may write and pre-record or write only a portion of your Eulogy, such as the special highlights in your life and words of gratitude to others. Words that can only truly be conveyed by you. Your nominated person delivering your Eulogy then "tops and tails" your Eulogy words with introductory and concluding words of their own, providing a blend of the first person (you) speaking directly to your loved ones and a reflection of others outlining your impact on their life and your life's greatest moments and achievements.

Alternatively, you may draft your Eulogy and nominate a loved one to read it to your guests on your behalf as outlined in Your Eulogy Guidelines. Capture the essence of how you wish to be remembered by providing clear and specific information and memories you wish to be shared on your final day. It is equally important you cite any life moments, occasions, events, conversations, incidences, relationships or interactions you do not wish to be mentioned in your Eulogy.

Thinking about this moment in time when your loved ones are gathered in one room with the sole purpose of honoring your life is confronting and daunting. Considering your mortality requires strength, courage and the emotional reserves to deal with the intensity of facing death. Thinking about your passing actually means acknowledging one day you will pass.

However nothing will compare to the sense of empowerment, control and peace of mind your proactive measures to ensure the highlights in your life and your most loved memories are immortalized. A personal reflection for your loved ones and future generations to cherish.

Whether you decide to write, record and/or deliver your Eulogy, the principles of a memorable Eulogy are the same. Eulogies must be written from the heart, sharing honest, sincere and genuine feelings about your life. Champion the freedom to guarantee the last memories of you are a declaration of your wishes and not somebody else's. This is your last toast.

“Say not in grief he is no more – but live in thankfulness that he was”.

Guidelines for Writing Your Eulogy

A Eulogy (Tribute or Remembrance speech) tells a descriptive story about what the deceased was like. These uplifting stories typically share memories and reminders regarding either how funny, ambitious, serious, intelligent, compassionate a person was. The story may reflect successes, good times (and the not so good times), life milestones, personality traits, characteristics and endearing qualities regarding how a person conducted themselves during their life. Even if many people have previously heard a particular story, reliving the experience provides them and others great comfort and assists towards coping with their grieving.

Traditionally a Eulogy is between 1 – 3 pages and lasts 20 – 30 minutes to deliver whilst frequently referencing the deceased by name (or their nickname).

The person delivering the Eulogy usually briefly introduces themselves highlighting their relationship to the deceased “for those of you who don’t know me, my name is ... and I am the eldest son of”. Depending on circumstances they may briefly mention the details leading to or surrounding the person's death, followed with:

“I am honored to share with you what (he/she) contributed...” (a Personal Reflection Eulogy)

“I am honored to share with you how (he/she) should best be remembered...” (a Tribute Eulogy)

“I am honored to share with you how (he/she) lived...” (a Biographical Eulogy)

“I am honored to share with you what (he/she) should best be remembered for...” (a Themed Eulogy)

“I am honored to share with you how (he/she) will always be remembered ...” (a Legacy Eulogy)

“I am honored to invite you all to share how you will remember ...” (a Communal Eulogy)

As part of the Eulogy introduction often people add that they are speaking on behalf of the family, specific family members or as a representative of the deceased's family and wish to acknowledge and express appreciation to all the valued guests for attending the funeral service.

However if you consider pre-recording your Eulogy to be played at your funeral service, the recording would need to be introduced and form part of your nominated Eulogy speaker's opening remarks. Presenting your Eulogy would create a moving tribute for your guests to hear the texture of your voice one last time and your messages of love. Words of wisdom, stories or lessons from your past or a special memory you sense your family may relate or enjoy re-living together or, you may simply let them know how much you love them and what you specifically appreciated about them. This compassionate gesture may be appreciated more than you will ever know!

If you choose the more traditional type of Eulogy, whereby a family member or loved one writes and delivers your Eulogy, then providing information highlighting some of your fondest living memories will greatly assist their efforts and ensure your Eulogy is an accurate representation of you and speaks to the person you are.

You may wish to also include some guidance regarding the tone of your Eulogy as well as any specific life events, incidences, relationships or experiences you do not want included in your Eulogy.

Before putting pen to paper the first thing to determine is the type of Eulogy you feel would best reflect the information you intend sharing with your attendees. A Eulogy may commence using one type of genre and morph into another depending on what details or stories are being presented. For example, a Eulogy may commence as a Biographical tribute to the deceased but end as a Themed Eulogy, which is commonly used people who dedicated their life to a particular passion.

When considering the type of style for your Eulogy take into account some Eulogies are more formal than others and sets the tone of your final farewell. If your preference is for your funeral service, for example, to be an informal joyous celebration of your life, you may consider carrying that "uplifting" thread throughout all your funeral arrangements, including your Eulogy.

A Biographical Eulogy follows a chronological life journey of the deceased, peppering their timeline with historical highlights of their life. Typically this form of Eulogy is less emotive as details are based on factual accounts and milestones from the deceased's life.

A Personal Reflection Eulogy is a snapshot of all the precious memories of the deceased's life highlighting a few most cherished remembrances. This Eulogy style is one of the easier ones to write as the memories can be shared in any particular order and it is generally more emotive and heart-felt than a historical-type Eulogy.

A Tribute Eulogy tends to focus primarily on the deceased's most desirable characteristics which may include achievements, accomplishments, endearing qualities, admirable abilities – whatever made them unique as a person. With the citing of a specific personality trait or merit, often anecdotal examples or real-life stories are shared to emphasize these characteristics and capture the essence of the deceased. This type of Eulogy is a combination of historical (biographical) and reflection because part of the content presented is factual and some reminiscing about the deceased's life.

A Themed Eulogy is written specifically around one central area of the deceased's life typically if someone had a passion, accomplishment or commitment to a major aspect of their life. This may include a person who had a unique ability, skill set or a career/vocation which defined the majority of their life for example, an educator, specialist in their field, professional sportsperson, musician or they may have had a strong religious faith. These Eulogies can be especially touching to funeral guests who shared this particular life's love with the deceased.

A Legacy Eulogy highlights one specific aspect of the deceased's life that will go on in perpetuity. Such as, a legacy of forever lasting love which relives the love afforded in life and a continuation after death. This Eulogy format is possibly the most difficult to write and deliver to capture a personalized and empowering spiritual message regarding the deceased.

A Communal Eulogy is lead by one person who proceeds to invite others to share their fondest memories of the deceased – often pre-arranged, but sometimes unscripted and incorporated during the delivery of the Eulogy. This is a less formal way of delivering reflective stories of the deceased by encouraging family members and friends to participate by expressing their feelings and share happier times. These Eulogies are the easiest to prepare however carry an element of risk. If well-received by the guests it can be very powerful and enriching.

To reduce the risk of a funeral guest speaking for too long or not in an appropriate or relevant manner, the Eulogy presenter may privately meet with the guests intended to be invited to speak and provide them with some guidelines or an outline of expectations, as well as cite any prepared speech notes prior to the service.

Once you have determined the style or combination of formats for your Eulogy which will most effectively serve the dissemination of your information, consider either drafting your Eulogy or begin with any discussions points, topics, highlights, stories or specific names of people, you would like mentioned such as:

Personal sentiments to involve and engage your attendees **“I am sure all of us share ...”**.

Discuss happier times your loved ones shared with you including anecdotal real-life stories and accomplishments which you wish to be relayed to express your contributions during your life and perhaps the lives of others, the community. Reference specific family members who you shared these moments, such as your children. **“I will never forget the time when ...” or “I fondly recall the time I was told about ...”**.

Include stories in your Eulogy guidelines to help your family recall the details around specific moments, achievements and milestones, events. This will provide you with the peace of mind knowing your memories are reflected accurately and remembered the way you wish.

Talk about a favorite childhood or family pet that brought you immense love and joy. Pets are a wonderful example of unconditional love. **“For those of you who knew (him/her) well, would know of (his/her/them) love for (pet’s name.)”** Blend the message of the story to your character so people understand the person you are. **“He/she always did these acts of...” or “constantly helping others by...” or “always found the time to...”**.

Express how you positively affected the lives of others. Your family can add how your death is likely to affect them and impact the lives of others **“This is a typical example of how (he/she/they) treated others including myself...” or “I know this will be a considerable difficult adjustment for ...”**.

Acknowledge the pain and sorrow being felt of others and give them permission to exhibit their grief **“I know we are altogether in sharing the grief of our beloved friend ...”**.

Mention your surviving family and friends specifically by name to ensure they form part of your life story, peppered with a few interesting moments or illustrations of the way they positively impacted your life, a snapshot of living memories or the depth of your love for others with examples of how you expressed this love to them in life. Incorporate heart-warming moments and any quirky facts to illustrate your uniqueness.

Provide information so it can be captured and cited in the following ways:

*Where were you born? **"To think (he/she/they) was born in a small town with such humble beginnings"***

*Did you have a nickname or a name commonly referred to by others? Was there a reason you inherited this nickname, such as a story regarding how it transpired or why it "stuck" through your living years? **"Many of us fondly referred to (him/her/them) as and some of you may not have heard how that pet name came about. Allow me to share the story with you"**.*

*Where did you meet the love of your life? **"Then on a particularly cold Autumn day (he/she/they) walked into the room and at that very moment it began."***

*Do you have siblings you wish to be mentioned? Younger or older? What childhood memories do you wish to share? Schools you attended? Were you school, sports captain or house captain? Did you have a funny or pertinent school year book entry? **"I am sure many of us may recall the time when"***

*Any professional qualifications, achievements, awards, titles, memberships attained during your life or acknowledgements by your peers, accolades from work colleagues? **"As many of you would know (he/she/they) was awarded/titled/bestowed ... which is a great honor"**.*

*Did you have sporting achievements, aspiring goals, hobbies, a specific interest or life lesson you want referenced? **"One of (his/her/they) greatest pastimes ..."** or **"You may recall one of (his/her/they) favorite sayings..."**.*

*Are there any heirlooms or items of historical significance to highlight? **"Every time I see a I will fondly remember (him/her/them)..."**.*

Any military service tales to be told or medals awarded, titles presented? "Some of you may not be aware of the great honor bestowed."

Any directorships, chairmanships, club memberships and/or positions or appointments worth noting? Were you involved in any charitable or voluntary work or philanthropy you wish shared with your attendees?

Any particular travel tales, likes and dislikes about particular countries or life in general or favorite music, prose, poems, movies, perhaps a much-loved television series, celebrity or pastime?

Elevate any messages, tale or memory by incorporating a preferred song, poem, phrase, quotation, metaphor that was atypical and pertinent to you or a saying, action, gesture, habit or quirkiness commonly known by your friends and relatable to your attendees. What are the things you either do or say regularly?

The words chosen in a Eulogy should hold a positive tone and avoid diminishing the dying process with phrases such as the "person gave up", "I'm dying to tell you", "they lost their battle", "it was to die for", "over my dead body" and "bucket list".

You may nominate for your Eulogy to conclude with a photo presentation played to your favorite song/s to share your happier moments and deepen your family and friend's awareness of their mortality and appreciation of their life. Select specific photographs you wish illustrated (and specify if you want them to appear in a particular order). You may also have specific photos you would rather not be shown during this forum such as wedding photos or during a time you were unwell or not a pleasant time in your life.

The conclusion of a Eulogy typically commences with the speaker stating how much the deceased will be deeply missed but always remembered and loved in people's hearts. Often the mourners' pain is acknowledged and they are encouraged to accept their grief and express their feelings of sorrow and in some circumstances remorse or regret.

Your Eulogy Guidelines may also include a section on anything you wish not to be included or mentioned in your Eulogy, or any speeches and also applied to your Funeral Service Booklet, which people typically retain.

Sometimes people inadvertently select a memory or story which they fondly remember you by, however this may be an incident or conversation you do not deem a true reflection of your character or the content may

be of a sensitive nature or require more discretion than to be relived or re-told in the presence of senior family members or children. Interactions or events may be taken out of context when explained by others, which is more reason to be specific regarding what is meaningful to you and the memory of you.

Guideline Tip: check the spelling of names, accuracy of any dates and ensure it is proofread to polish and refine. Your Eulogy Guidelines will be critical to its custodian when you pass as they will not be able to call on you for any clarification.

“We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give” (Winston Churchill)

Some of the most famous Eulogies commence with an opening statement, metaphor or quotation to best describe or represent the deceased’s values, character or passions, some examples as follows:

“God uses good people to do great things” (for Rosa Parks).

“My Daddy was my hero ...” (for Steve Irwin).

“I was born in a house my father built. Today we can look back at this little house and still imagine a young boy sitting by the window at the attic... from those humble roots grew the force of a driving dream” (for Richard Nixon).

“Diana was the very essence of compassion, of duty, of style, of beauty” (for Princess Diana).

“He has ceased to be, bereft of life, he rests in peace, he has kicked the bucket, hopped the twig, bit the dust, snuffed it, breathed his last, and gone to meet the Great Head of Light Entertainment in the sky, and I guess that we’re thinking how sad it is that a man of such talent, such capability and kindness, of such intelligence should now be so suddenly spirited away at the age of only forty-eight, before he achieved many of the things of which he was capable, and before he’d had enough fun. Well, I feel that I should say, “Nonsense. Good riddance to him...” (for Graham Chapman cited by John Cleese).

Regret is a painful thing, especially when it can be avoided and this is your opportunity to furnish your loved ones with all the information you wish to be included during the presentation of your final moments, as well as nothing you don't to ensure Your Life is remembered in Your Words, Your Way.

“While I thought I was learning to live, I have been learning how to die” (Leonardo Da Vinci)

Donations to Charity by Your Family and Friends

I would like my friends and relatives to provide charitable donations in my memory:

No:

Yes, to a charity / charities which closely represents my cause of death:

Yes, my loved ones to decide which one(s) are most appropriate:

Yes, specifically to this nominated charity / charities:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

I would like my friends and relatives to give donations to charity in lieu of flowers and floral arrangements:

No:

Yes, a charity / charities which closely represents my cause of death:

Yes, my loved ones to decide which one(s) are most appropriate:

Yes, specifically to this nominated charity / charities:

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

It is customary in many societies to send floral tributes to a funeral service (or to the deceased remaining family) as a means of expressing their sympathy. Whilst flowers at a service are beautiful, they do not last, so sometimes people nominate a donation is made to a charitable cause in memory of their passing in lieu of flowers.

You may elect for your funeral guests to leave a donation to charity in your loving memory. This option does not preclude your guests or others not in attendance at your service to send floral tributes to your family to convey their condolences and pay their respects.

You may wish to specify a charity or charities meaningful to you or leave this decision to your loved ones to decide what they feel is most appropriate depending on the circumstance resulting in your departure. For example, if you passed away due to a particular illness or medical condition this may be taken into consideration when selecting a suitable charity.

“People living deeply have no fear of death” (Anais Nin)

Your Monument or Marker

I would like a monument / marker for my final resting place:

I already have a pre-arranged monument / marker, stored at the following location
(company name, address, phone number, model, type, color and the details of any pre-payments or deposits including supplier and contact details):

No:

Yes and the type of monument / marker I would like is:

Specify any additional details about the monument or marker (eg. cost, color, where to be placed):

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

The word “monument” means “to remind”. A Monument or Marker is positioned at your grave site or other final resting place as a visible memory of you and your life by incorporating your own inscription for your surviving loved ones and future generations to view when they visit your final resting place.

Monuments are available in various shapes and sizes but the most basic, inexpensive monument and easy to maintain is a flat stone marker usually made of granite or bronze that lays flush to the ground typically 24” x 18” (inches).

The next level up from a flat marker is a beveled or slant marker which also lays on the ground, however protrudes from the ground with a personalized memorial message or inscription. Upright monuments (found in cemeteries as opposed to memorial parks) vary from a classic headstone, plaque, cross or complex sculptures also made of granite in a variety of colors.

Creating your own Monument provides an opportunity to nominate your final parting words in perpetuity to reflect how you wish your personality portrayed and your legacy remembered.

Therefore the words chosen for your Monument should be selected with extensive thoughtful consideration. It literally exemplifies an insight into the person you are, etched in stone (or marble) forever.

Deciding the most relevant quotation, metaphor, saying, phrase, a piece of prose or scripture, a line from a favorite song or movie, or your own original words, to accurately capture the essence of what defines your life values, can be both exhilarating and challenging.

A Monument may also include specific graphics or images. Your only limitation is space. Ideally save a “mock-up” on CD, DVD or USB with this document so the words appear in the layout/format you envisage, such as the font and position of the words and any images to ensure no meaning or emphasis in the delivery of your message is lost in translation.

Alternatively list some guidelines or a concept so your family are not second guessing your ideal inscription which will be seen by future generations, whilst dealing with their grief and immense sorrow.

You can use this “lasting message” to provide others with inspiration, thoughtful reflection or to simply entertain. There are no right or wrong answers however it is imperative this final engraving in memoriam pertinently reflects how you imagine and wish to be remembered.

If your monument is arranged by loved ones it is likely to be from their perspective, expressing love for the person no longer in their lives. By selecting your monument prior to passing enables you to choose the materials, size, design of the monument and most paramount tailor the wording engraved on your monument or marker to reflect your personality in perpetuity.

Furthermore you are relieving your loved ones of yet another critical and permanent decision during an emotionally difficult time. Your monument or marker forms a part of history and historically only you can guarantee it is a true and accurate reflection of you.

A visit to a monument builder’s showroom is recommended (or spend time researching suppliers and options) to gain an understanding of the vast array of the types of stone, colors and other qualities to custom design your Monument or Marker. Once you have selected your monument, you should specify the manufacturer/vendor/supplier and your preferences in this document or include a photo to ensure your monument is in harmony with your wishes.

If you have elected for your ashes to be stored in a niche or in a columbarium, this is usually a simple plaque of specified dimensions. If you would like to have a more visible commemoration like a park bench, sculpture, sundial or a tree, you may additionally consider having this commemoration or memorial located in a special place away from the site of your remains and specify accordingly.

“The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time” (Mark Twain)

Your Epitaph

I would like the following epitaph or inscription etched on my monument/marker (eg. years born and deceased, phrase, quotation or my final words):

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

An Epitaph is your own inscription which appears on your memorial, monument or headstone visible for your surviving loved ones and future generations to view when they visit your final resting place.

Creating a tailored Epitaph provides an opportunity to nominate your final parting words in perpetuity to reflect how you wish your personality and your legacy to be remembered.

Therefore the words chosen for your Epitaph should be selected with extensive, thoughtful consideration. It literally exemplifies an insight into the person you are, etched in stone forever.

Deciding the most relevant quotation, metaphor, phrase, line from a favorite song or movie, a piece of prose or scripture, , or your own original words, to accurately capture the essence of what defines your life values, can be both exhilarating and challenging.

An Epitaph may also include some graphics or images, limited only by size restrictions. Ideally save a “mock-up” along with this document so the words appear in the layout/format you envisage, such as the font and position of the words and any images to ensure no meaning or emphasis in the delivery of your message is lost in translation.

Alternatively list some guidelines or a concept so your family are not second guessing your ideal inscription which will be seen by future generations, whilst dealing with their grief and immense sorrow.

You can use this “lasting message” to provide others with inspiration, thoughtful reflection or to simply entertain. There are no right or wrong answers, but it is imperative this final engraving in memoriam pertinently reflects how you imagine and wish to be remembered.

Furthermore you are relieving your loved ones of yet another critical and permanent decision during an emotionally difficult time. Your Epitah forms a part of history and historically only you can guarantee it is a true and accurate reflection of you.

Some famous Epitaphs:

"That nothing's so sacred as honor and nothing's so loyal as love" (Wyatt Earp)

"Everybody Loves Somebody Sometime" (Dean Martin)

"The best is yet to come" (Frank Sinatra)

"I told you I was ill." (Spike Milligan)

“Our death is not an end if we can live on in our children and the younger generation. For they are us, our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life” (Albert Einstein)

Your Commemoration or Memorial

I request a commemoration or a lasting memorial created in my name (or family name or anonymously):

No:

Yes, and I wish my legacy to be reflected in the following form:

With these specific details (cost, preferred location and duration for example In Perpetuity or a decade from my passing):

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Your commemoration is a memorial made in your honor and usually, in perpetuity (or for a specified timeframe). Typically a commemoration is established in your name or your family name in memoriam. A legacy typically to benefit others. Your memorial can be expressed in a variety of ways but should reflect what is meaningful to you during your life to leave or mark in this realm.

For example, your commemoration can be practical such as a public picnic table, a park bench, a tree, a sundial or landscaped garden or in the form of a trophy, plaque, signage highlighting your name on a hospital wing or ward, a community park or spiritually encompassed in a work of art or sculpture.

This legacy of your life may also be symbolized through a less tangible object, such as funding an educational benefit, a scholarship, a student award or a scientific or medical grant. The size of the contribution is not relevant, but this thoughtful intention is likely to benefit others.

Often memorials are not arranged prior to death, but details citing your wishes towards future arrangements, including intended recipients and a budget so costs are controlled, should be specified. When the time comes discussions may transpire between your loved ones and with Local Government/ City Council, depending on the country your memorial is to be established, and other relevant industry sectors.

Your commemoration is a memorial reminding others of your life signifying a symbolic way you wish to give back to the community. By citing your preferences you will gain the peace of mind knowing your legacy will be established to honor your life your way and assist the lives of others.

“Death, loss and grief are natural and universal experiences however we weren’t born to follow”

Your Final Disposition Ceremony

I would like a ceremony at my burial site or scattering or placement of my ashes:

No:

Yes, with the following details (any specific hymns, readings, psalms, prayers, announcements to be read or a particular priest, celebrant, clergy, individual or friend to lead the ceremony):

I would like my burial ceremony held immediately following my funeral service:

I would like my ashes scattering ceremony held within the following timeframes of my funeral service (nominate same day or number of days or weeks following your service. This presents an opportunity for your loved ones unable to make your funeral service to attend this ceremony, particularly travelling from overseas or interstate):

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Unless otherwise described above, I would like this final ceremony to be:

Open to: Public / Friends & Family only / Family only / No preference

Type: Formal gathering / Informal gathering / No preference

Mood: Sombre / Festive / Elaborate / Simple / No preference

Cost: Minimal / Average / Lavish / No preference

At the final disposition of my body or remains I would like the following special requests:

Regardless of whether you have elected to have a funeral service, you may decide to have a ceremony at your actual burial site or at the storage (burial) or scattering of your ashes. This is typically a shorter, more intimate ceremony where someone may say a brief prayer or a few words on behalf of the deceased.

However it is becoming increasingly more popular to have a larger gathering where the loved ones of the nearest and dearest are invited to say their final words in a less structured environment than a traditional funeral service.

Often people very close to the deceased feel empty after the funeral service if they were not involved in delivering the Eulogy, distribution of Funeral Service Booklets or a Pallbearer, so your Final Disposition ceremony is an opportunity to allow all your significant others to play their role honoring your life, without encroaching on cultural traditions, religious and family expectations during your formal funeral service.

Your Final Disposition is typically less structured and a raw declaration of your life, affording your loved ones the liberty to express their feelings of loss and sorrow without the formalities. If you did not provide a theme or any particular request at your funeral service or wake, this ceremony is possibly the gathering you could incorporate something reflective of you, such as your guests wearing your favorite color or bring along an iconic item symbolic of you, such as a photograph or letter/email, poem or an item or moment you shared.

This forum provides an opportunity to bury or release a personal keepsake along with the deceased to be taken with them on their journey. This can be anything of relevance to you in life, such as a piece of signature clothing eg a hat/cap, scarf, or a pair of much-loved shoes, your favorite book, album/CD, a wheel off your triathlon winning bike, musical instrument, your beloved pet's collar, a bottle of your drinking pleasure, a photo, tribute, award from a memorable moment. Whatever exemplifies the individual person you are whilst providing comforts to your loved ones as they send you from this realm in peace.

“Love is stronger than death even though it can't stop death from happening, but no matter how hard death tries it can't separate people from love. It can't take away our memories either. In the end, life is stronger than death” (Anonymous)

After Your Funeral

I would like a memorial gathering, wake, ceremony, function or party immediately following my funeral service:

No:

Yes, with the following details (include the “tone / mood” you wish at this gathering, the format, any location preferences and special requests eg whether or not you catering (food and / or beverages served), music played and the atmosphere you feel is suitable to commemorate and celebrate your life):

Unless otherwise described above, I would like this gathering to be:

Open to: Public / Friends & Family only / Family only / No preference

Type: Formal gathering / Informal gathering / No preference

Mood: Somber / Festive / Elaborate / Simple / No preference

Cost: Minimal / Average / Lavish / No preference

I nominate the following person leads the proceedings (name and relationship to you):

No preference – my loved ones to decide:

Immediately following your funeral service you may wish to specify all your funeral service attendees or your closest loved ones gather at a location for a wake, collation, function or celebration which may vary in tone from your service depending on your cultural and religious influences. This gathering can range from a very somber affair to an upbeat celebration – or anything in between.

Western societies commonly hold an intimate gathering with refreshments for family and close friends immediately following the funeral service held in a loved one's home or at the funeral home premises.

Your final disposition ceremony, for example burial or scattering of the ashes, may transpire days or weeks later, but typically this gathering is more practical when guests are already present.

It is imperative you provide preferences regarding the mood/atmosphere you imagine such as formal or informal, somber or festive, as well as specifying the people you wish to attend. Other considerations are timing, type of music played, service of food and beverages and any personalized touches, speeches, rituals or blessings. Otherwise you may simply specify a budget for this gathering so costs are controlled and allow your loved ones to decide on the specifics.

You may request pre-arranged gifts for your guests as a keepsake, such as a culmination of photos and highlights of your life on a USB or arrange a final farewell tribute pre-recorded to be played at this ceremonial gathering. Perhaps your Last Message is played (or re-played if showcased at your funeral service) if pre-recorded or read to your guests at this more intimate gathering rather than at your funeral service. At the very least you may wish to consider a media presentation featuring photos of you and your life's highlights along with mementos, trophies, religious artifacts or items iconic of you.

You may request your guests bring an item reminiscent of you. Items such as a photo of you, a gift or card you may have given them, a poem as an expression of you, a much-loved book or something iconic to reflect your passions, hobbies, sporting or other interests. These items will create discussion points amongst your guests and stimulate memorable, funny, touching stories about you and how you impacted on their lives as well as your life's contribution to others.

“We say that the hour of death cannot be forecast, but when we say this we imagine that hour as placed in an obscure and distant future. It never occurs to us that it has any connection with the day already begun or that death could arrive this same afternoon. The same afternoon which is so certain and which has every hour filled in advance” (Marcel Proust)

Your Digital Legacy

I nominate the following person/s as my Digital Executor (name and relationship to you):

Remember to inform your Legal Will Executor of your nominated Digital Executor to call on when required.

Consider Your Digital Assets before they are swept away in your final moments:

Your online content is a reflection of your life and an extension of the person you are. Snapshots, memories, and keepsakes of your life highlights peppered through your photos, videos, posts, email messages, tweets, vines and blogs, all forming part of your cyber footprint.

Due to the reciprocal nature of digital media not only are your personal messages and input captured, but also those who have responded to your emails, comments and “likes” on photos, all comprise the entirety of your social media. This online interaction becomes part of your digital legacy adding to the texture of your life and your lifetime associations.

Digital assets, such as PayPal, eBay accounts and other online businesses, forms part of your financial portfolio, creating a historical footprint of all online transactions. Therefore consideration should be given to any preferences regarding retaining or discarding your digital media to ensure the assets you wish to remain for future generations are placed in memoriam and any private, confidential or sensitive information you prefer deleted upon your passing.

Your Afterlife Digital Assets:

Protecting your digital identity is the only way to avoid the risk of extinction. Long term viability of digital content has been largely disregarded until recently. It is increasingly important to consider how to manage and preserve your digital assets, due to the rapid evolvement of technological changes within the digital world.

Create Your Social Media and Digital Legacy:

Preserve your identity for future generations by transferring heirlooms, videos, photos, tweets and blogs, as well as online financial documents, correspondence and files, by creating your digital estate or digital legacy. Proactive steps to leave behind your digital legacy and precautionary measures to erase sensitive information and de-active accounts, is one of the greatest gifts you could consider for your loved ones and for your peace of mind. A permanent historical online archive of you beyond your physical life.

Design Your Digital Estate:

The key to preserving your digital files and social media presence is making informed decisions about your final wishes for your digital assets. To create your digital estate, identify which personal devices and internet accounts, as well as the content on each of those devices and portals, you would like in memoriam.

The majority of your personal content is likely stored on either your home and/or work devices. However until recently, data is also being stored on iCloud. This shift to cloud-based storage services makes it increasingly more challenging to locate digital content in the absence of a clear inventory to guide your digital executor.

Digital asset types to consider when compiling your inventory include:

- *Content from social and multi-media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, Pinterest, Instagram, VK, Google Plus+, Tumblr, MySpace, Vine, to name just a few*
- *Content stored on computers desktops, tablets, laptops, ipads, iphones, other devices*
- *Email Messages including content from incoming, sent and stored messages*
- *Online businesses such as online blogs, websites, stores including PayPal, eBay and other storefronts*

Begin by making a thorough inventory of your computers, mobile devices, email, social websites, and other important online accounts. Devices and the digital files stored on them are two separate things. The files on a single device are part of your digital estate which can be shared with others upon your request.

Consider the future owner/s of both the device and the stored files, which may be the same person or differing parties. For example, you may nominate your spouse or partner receives the data or content, however one of your children, grandchildren, friend or work colleague receives the device, such as your laptop or iphone. Ensuring your instructions are clear and concise will avoid confusion and possibly any family disagreements during an already challenging time for your digital executor. Planning ahead will provide you with peace of mind knowing your directives will be executed in harmony with your wishes.

Your Digital Estate Inventory:

To preserve (or discard) any of your online content, your digital executor or a nominated person must be granted permission to gain access to your computer, laptop and/or other mobile devices, to successfully implement your preferences. Details in relation to the location of your devices, username/s, and password/s are essential to execute your specified digital asset estate planning.

List the physical location of each of your devices, all content accounts and sources and clearly state your final wishes for every asset (and device), as well as the important files and data stored on each device. Specify the name of your intended digital executor along with permission to grant him/her username and password access, as well as clear and concise handling instructions. Providing access to all your personal devices is essential as your files may not exist elsewhere.

Copy any personal data you may have stored at work onto a USB or to your personal (private home) computer or laptop to archive in the event your employee (or business partner/work colleague) denies your digital executor access, or in the event your computer is erased upon your passing. In fact, storing your digital content in more than one secure location is recommended and it is essential to back up your computer and personal devices automatically to safeguard your data from hard drive failure, computer theft or your home or workplace being destroyed.

Your digital executor will be the person or an online service (some recommendations below) you've nominated to act on your behalf following your final act. Their role will be to distribute or delete your digital assets in harmony with your final wishes.

If you deem your legal executor appropriate, they may also become your digital executor. The Executor or Public Trustee cited in your Will is the only person with legal authority to settle your physical estate. Should you however elect to specify another person as your digital executor, it is recommended you incorporate their name and contact details in your Will (or make a Codicil – an amendment to your existing Will) to clearly direct your legal executor to call on your digital executor when the time comes to manage your digital assets. It is recommended you seek professional legal council to advise you in relation to any aspects pertaining to your Last Will and Testament.

Your Digital Executor is the person/s who will receive your digital and social media assets upon your passing. Without your cited guidance, they may not even be aware of the extent of your digital content.

Common choices for digital executors include:

- *Spouse, partner, your child/ren, close family member, friend, business partner or work colleague*
- *Everyone – leaving your digital content online for anyone to access*
- *Nobody – you may choose not to leave your digital content to anyone (therefore your digital footprint remains untouched or you nominate to destroy all your digital data and social media content and deactivate your accounts to ensure nobody gains access, otherwise there are no guarantees).*

Certain content on your device/s may not be transferable. For example, Digital Rights Managed (DRM) music is not transferable content since you only purchased the rights to listen to the music, not to own the music.

Your Final Digital Legacy:

The final step in creating your digital estate plan is to decide what instructions you want your digital executor/s to follow in relation to your digital assets upon your passing including:

Archiving – you may elect your digital executor creates a copy of all, or some of your content, using CD, USB, or external hard drive(s) to retain multiple copies of digital content.

Sharing – you may nominate access be provided to more than one person or group. Portions of your data can be stored on the Internet, or separate media and distributed specifically according to your final wishes.

Deleting – you may choose to delete either a portion, or your entire digital content, from all or some of your computers, devices, or cloud-based accounts. It is imperative you provide clear and concise instructions regarding what you wish to be permanently deleted.

Taking no action – you may choose to do nothing and allow your digital executor to decide what to do with your digital content following your passing. If this is your preference you should state your wishes to avoid any confusion or possible conflict amongst your family members.

If you nominate more than one person to be your digital executor you should clarify your preferences if they are not in agreement in relation to data or photos to be placed in memoriam. For example, one of your executors has the final say.

Preserve Your Digital Afterlife:

If your Will or an addendum does not specify guidance in relation to your digital assets, then your digital estate may be subject to the specific laws of the State where you live at the time of your passing. Other States have proposed legislation to protect a person's digital identity in the absence of a Will.

Clearly specifying your preferences for your digital assets in your Will along with the names of your nominated digital executor/s ensures an additional precautionary measure towards your final wishes being successfully executed.

To further protect your digital assets, you may wish to discuss with your solicitor/lawyer appointing an Enduring Power of Attorney or Durable Power of Attorney to make decisions to manage your entire estate on your behalf, in the event you become incapacitated.

Technology to preserve your digital afterlife is continuously evolving therefore consider checking the “Terms of Service” of your specific online service provider/s to confirm access privileges for your digital executor. Policies for managing digital assets following death vary according to provider/s for email, multimedia and digital memento-sharing and social websites, online business and financial platforms.

Similarly, the “Terms of Service” for cloud-based services will apply according to the contract for the specific accounts you held at the time of passing.

Preserving and maintaining digital content forever in its current state is impractical, as a result of ongoing changes and developments in technology. Your digital content and data will need to be maintained in current formats that are accessible. Digital files are only as reliable as the physical disks where they are stored. Redundancy and backups are essential to secure file integrity.

Not unlike time capsules buried 50 years ago where information was stored on floppy discs and more recently on micro-chips, consider multiple storage devices to ensure technology has not out dated at the time of your passing so your loved ones and future generations are able to access your information, photos, videos, blogs and any messages you elect to leave in memoriam.

To guarantee your digital content is preserved, it is recommended you convert all data from older-to-newer formats, or preserve the technology needed to read or decipher older formats. This can be achieved by converting all the content you wish to archive to a single format so your digital executor can manage your data more easily.

Lastly, ensure your data is not too voluminous by proactively forward planning, archiving, saving and editing your critical documents, photographs and contents you wish to preserve, as well as any data or information you wish to be destroyed.

This will greatly reduce the burden on your digital executor and remove any guess work on their behalf. For example, rather than leave 1000 photographs behind consider 80 – 100 reflecting your life’s journey.

This can be achieved by editing and tagging your favorites, deleting duplicates as well as extracting any critical content meaningful to you to separate from the rest. Start with the "end in mind" by selecting all the data you want cherished that speaks to the person you are and save in a separate location, folder and multiple devices such as a USB to simplify the process for your digital executor as well as peace of mind knowing you have captured all your significant documents, videos, files, emails, blogs and photographs in perpetuity and your memory will vividly remain in the hearts of others.

When confronting your inevitability, life is distilled down to the essentials. Your Digital Assets form part of what is essential to you and others, after all these are the places where your words and the memory of you linger long after you pass with your Digital Legacy.

Your Directory of Items:

Your lifetime of associations will take time for someone trusted to notify of your passing, cancel memberships and subscriptions and de-active accounts and policies. Documenting your personal items removes all the guess work and alleviates the burden for your Next of Kin and Executor attempting to unravel your life. It will greatly expedite the process of handling your affairs more seamlessly and efficiently.

Include all relevant details, contact names, membership and policy numbers, account details, access codes, passwords, where applicable to your specific circumstances. Attach support materials such as agreements, contracts, policies and statements. You may find this disclosure uncomfortable, however if details are not provided, it may only be obtained by others by accessing your paperwork, files and personal documents.

- Executor or Public Trustee of Your Last Will and Testament
- Enduring Power Of Attorney / Durable Power of Attorney (POA)
- Solicitor / Lawyer
- Accountant / Chartered Accountant/ Investment or Financial Advisor / Stockbroker
- Social Security/ Social and Welfare Services / Centrelink
- Retirement Plans / Pension Funds & Scheme / Superannuation & Retirement Funds
- Banking Institution / societies / unions / financial institutions / credit card providers / any loan or lender companies / investors or shareholders / employees

- Trading reports / share portfolio synopsis
- Labour Unions / Trade Unions / Veteran Affairs
- Clubs, Professional Associations, Membership Groups eg gym, Rotary Club, Bowls
- Taxation Department – IRS / ATO / HM Revenue and Customs
- Electoral Commission/ Electoral Office
- Health Care Provider / Health Fund
- Insurance Companies including life insurance, accident, home and contents, vehicle, pet insurance, disability and any other policies
- Mobile provider / internet service provider and subscription services
- Doctor / Medical Practitioner or GP / Specialists / Dentist / Holistic Healers
- Hospital / Chemist / Pharmacy / Ambulance Service / Paramedics / Blood banks
- Motor vehicle registration – DMV / DVLA / Mains Roads
- Church / Religious groups and associations
- Household help such as gardening services, pool / septic system maintenance / cleaner
- Home Nursing Service / Home Delivery Services such as newspaper, milk, magazine subscriptions, grocery deliveries
- Landlord / Housing or Rental Authority / Body Corporate / Owner's Corporation
- Loyalty Programs / Member Discount Programs/ Local video, DVD store
- Home appliance rental, medical aids and other home utility rentals
- Post Office / Passport Agency for re-directing mail
- Local Government / Council re: utilities rates, power or electricity company, any automatic payments eg car insurance / registration, school fees
- Former School / college / university / educational institutions / Alumni associations
- Company Directorships / Board Appointments / charity Boards / voluntary committees
- Community / service organizations eg Rotary Clubs, Lions, Zonta, Apex, National Seniors, Probus, RSL, National Seniors Association, Zonta, Freemasons, Friendly Societies

“Courageous conversations about how people have impacted your life provides great ever-lasting comfort and love and allows the strength and beauty of the human spirit to shine”

Words Without Breath

In addition to planning your funeral service to mark your final farewell and developing your Digital Legacy; as part of your ultimate departure, consider personalized and eternal loving messages scribed to your loved ones.

Imagine for a moment your spouse, child, partner, work colleague or a dear friend receiving your comforting words of strength and ever-lasting love when you are no longer in this realm, just as they were coming to the realization they would never hear from you ever again. Your messages are likely to be cherished for their remaining years more than you will ever know and aid them in developing a new self-identity now they are no longer your spouse or your daughter or your parent or your friend, except in memory.

Anthropologists suggest that people’s stories play an important role in knitting the fabric of the human community. The letters that concentration camp victims, passengers in planes headed for crash landings and the note to family from a doomed Russian naval officer trapped in a submarine, highlights the importance of narratives in people’s response to death.

These unfortunate incidences did not permit prior notification of their final written words, however with time, thoughtful consideration and depending on your circumstances, you may wish to inform your loved ones of your intentions, to alleviate the possibility of any shock from unexpectedly receiving a post-living message from you.

Words Without Breath gives power to your voice and remembrance to the person you are. Your words of wisdom, stories or lessons from your past, or a special memory your family will find relatable or enjoy learning about or simply let someone know how much you love them, after all the mystery of love will always be greater than the mystery of death.

Create a powerful shift from your physical presence to one based on memories through your ever-lasting words

The first step is to generate a list of all the people in your life, past or present, who had meaningful significance. Anyone you wish to express heart-felt messages, describe how they impacted your life or a final chance to offer forgiveness so they to move on with their remaining days without spending time dwelling over a moment of regret. Developing a forgiving attitude at the end of life is critical. The more we can find peaceful resolutions in our relationships, the better.

You may reach out to people you never met such as your biological parents, the family members of your organ donor or an adopted child or; haven't spoken to in recent times including a long lost friend or an estranged sibling, former business partner or work colleague or someone from a prior relationship.

You may have just one person in mind or several - it doesn't matter. What matters are the people you wish to integrate their loss of you into their lives and continue their bond with you in new and lasting ways aided by your Words Without Breath.

Now is the time to capture any words left unsaid and deeds left undone, before it's too late

Consider any words left unsaid, deeds left undone or a robust conversation which never transpired you may wish to convey to your Words Without Breath recipients.

Most people have the need to feel understood. What would you like others to understand about you as you consider taking leave of this life? It takes inner courage and an open heart to deal with the vulnerability to be true to who you really are whilst considering your final words to others.

Words to your children to provide them with guidance, strength and support, words of eternal love to your spouse, partner or a former relationship, a forgiving gesture you were unwilling or unable to do in life ... or simply express your gratitude to a beloved friend.

Picture your loved ones reading your messages, knowing they are the last words you will ever express. Your words are likely to deliver great joy, more than you will ever know and potentially help them cope with their grief and gain closure. They will always remember how much they meant to you.

A new type of connection, setting the platform for the way you will always be remembered

Your Words Without Breath will be distributed to your family and friends following your passing within nominated timeframes. Consider who you wish to activate and deliver your private and personal messages.

Common choices for an activation person are a trusted friend (providing your spouse, partner and children are recipients), your legal executor or digital executor, business partner, work colleague or an employee. Your message/s should be privately stored on a USB and retained with your Never Forgotten document and/or your Last Will and Testament with clear instructions when they are to be released to your activation person for distribution.

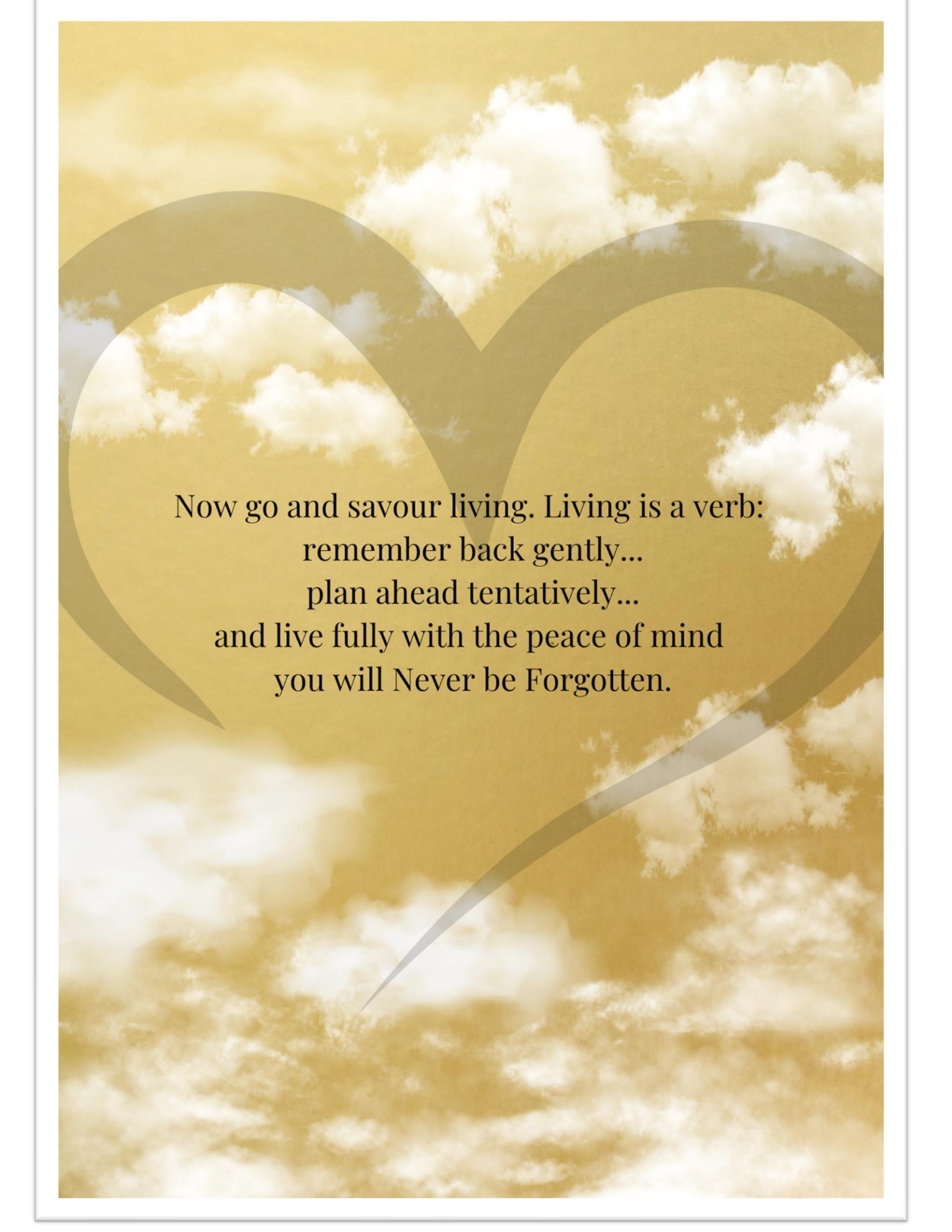
Storing your messages in more than one secure location is recommended, perhaps a copy given to a trusted friend to mitigate the risk of damages, theft or destroyed in a fire or flood.

Death is a place where eternal relationships are forged

Lastly, specify the timing for the delivery of your messages, which may vary in preferences depending on circumstances and your relationship with recipients. For example, your messages to your immediate family members are received upon your passing, however your siblings receive theirs at your funeral service (to possibly share with others) or the days following. You may request messages to friends are delivered on their birthdays, or the first year anniversary of your passing or other particular moment.

Perhaps you prefer all your messages are distributed after your Last Will and Testament is finalized, or when your children or grandchildren turn twenty-one, or just prior to their wedding day or other milestone event.

Providing clear and concise instructions will guarantee all your significant others receive their messages at a time meaningful to you. What the heart remembers and has once known shall then Never be Forgotten.



Now go and savour living. Living is a verb:
remember back gently...
plan ahead tentatively...
and live fully with the peace of mind
you will Never be Forgotten.

You were born original, don't die a copy.

This book is a pragmatic tool providing the strength and beauty of the human spirit through a selfless and compassionate act, in harmony with your final wishes, etched in memoriam for future generations.

It is never too early, or too soon to think about, make logical decisions and prepare for our life's last and ultimate adventure with time and dignity. It relieves your family of all the guess work during an emotionally charged time, whilst alleviating any risk of family and loved ones disagreeing on your preferences. It is the ultimate compassionate act providing you with absolute peace of mind!

Whilst not a legal document, this authentic celebration of your life will reflect everything you want and equally important, nothing you don't. It is designed to assist you in the many critical areas which research and history has proven, may go wrong if not specified when planning your final departure.

What the heart remembers and has once known shall then Never be Forgotten.

"This book is a must have resource for anyone seeking ever-lasting comfort for themselves and their loved ones. All your options are now at your fingertips to make informed decisions and plan ahead with strength, grace and courage." – Bernie Murchison, (former) Dean of Science, The Queensland University of Technology.

"Michelle displays exceptional intelligence, highlighted in this very practical guide to articulate your final farewell. A compassionate act relieving the burden for your family to make challenging decisions during a time of sorrow and bereavement". – Professor Lawrie Powell, AC MD PhD FRCP FRACP, Professor Emeritus of Medicine & Senior Research Fellow, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research- QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute.

"Michelle is always prepared to put all her energy and focus towards helping others without ever seeming to worry about what she personally gains from it. In today's world this quality is rare."
– Steven Bradbury Australia's Olympic Medalist.



Michelle Lagana's inspiration was a result of saving children's lives launching world-first cancer trials supported by the World Health Organisation. Through this journey she recognised dignity should be afforded to everyone by being remembered their way. First impressions as well as **final** impressions matter, reflected through your truth.