

1 March February 2021

Update on Funerals and Tangihanga

The Funeral Directors Association has this morning reacted to the announcement of Level 3 for Auckland and Level 2 for the rest of the country for the next 7 days. "Once again, our members are working hard to contact all those families who have funeral arrangements for the next 7 days and helping to support them in their grief which has been exacerbated by this new lockdown." Said Gary Taylor, President of the Funeral Directors Association. "We know the impact that delaying a meaningful farewell can have on the grieving process and how important it is for families to be able to gather and share memories of a lost loved one."

During Level 3 funerals and tangihanga are limited to a maximum of 10 and at Level 2 to 100. "Families do have options and our members are contacting the families they care for this week to help them make some very important decisions," Taylor said. "The last lockdown was initially for 3 days but this one is set for 7 days and we estimate that in Auckland alone more than 200 families will be directly impacted."

Funeral Directors Association members have been working with families to replan funerals and tangihanga delayed by the last lockdown as well as those families who have experienced the loss of a loved one since. "During the last lockdown the most favoured option was to delay the whole funeral and we will be offering a range of options taking into account this longer one," Taylor said "which can include taking care of the loved one for an extended period of time to let the lockdown finish or staging different aspects of the funeral at different times depending upon family circumstances." "

All Funeral Director Association members are fully prepared to manage within the Level 3 lockdown and assist families in a Covid19 safe way. "Anyone experiencing the death of a loved one during the lockdown period should contact one of our members immediately for help and support knowing that they can do so safely." Taylor added, "Please do not delay calling one of our members for help because of any Covid19 concerns." A full list of members is available on the Funeral Directors Association website (www.funeraldirectors.co.nz).

The Funeral Directors Association has been working with the Ministry of Health over the weekend on essential travel options for Funeral Directors. "I am pleased to confirm that the Director General of Health has signed an exemption order allowing funeral directors and embalmers to travel. This has been sent to police and MBIE and each of our members has a copy to allow them to travel across the border as essential workers," said David Moger, Funeral Directors Association CEO, "This is critical to enable our members to support grieving families at this difficult time."

Moger has also been working with the Ministry of Health to change the status of funeral directors and embalmers to essential health workers. "I am pleased to report that we have a meeting set up with the Ministry to develop a formal proposal for Dr Bloomfield to consider," Moger said "and this is a positive step forward to recognising that health-related matters include the end of life phase and ensuring that those left behind are fully cared for. We have been asking for this since the first set of lockdowns and had a major hui with the Ministry in November last year where again this emerged as a badly needed change."

Currently funeral directors and embalmers are categorised as an essential service but not an essential health service. "This must change," said Moger "because dealing with the deceased and caring for families who need a meaningful farewell as part of a healthy grieving process is a core component of the health system. Currently transporting the deceased is deemed an essential service just like transporting any other cargo but we believe that care for the deceased and grieving families goes beyond mere transport and is an essential part of the health service. To do it properly in a pandemic environment we need the essential health worker status".

"We know that lockdowns have a negative impact on the mental health of grieving families and that impact is growing." Said Taylor "Grieving families need the care of essential health service workers. We can only deliver that care in a pandemic environment if we are categorised as essential health workers and we are calling on the Government to grant us that status as a matter of urgency."

ENDS

For further information contact:

Gary Taylor, Funeral Directors Association President on 027 222 3795

David Moger, Funeral Directors Association CEO on 021 622 523



The Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand represents funeral directing companies that undertake the majority of funerals in New Zealand. They are a group of caring professionals who are committed to ensuring that the families they serve receive high-quality funeral service. For more information, visit our website: www.funeraldirectors.co.nz