



22 April 2021

AUSTRALIAN FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR UNIFORMITY ON ATTENDANCES AT FUNERALS AND THE FOOTY

The Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) has called on Victorian State leaders to immediately change the capacity restrictions for funerals in line with recent changes to attendance numbers at entertainment venues and sporting events.

Cathy Tobin, President of the Victorian Division of the Australian Funeral Directors Association has expressed disappointment with the latest State Government announcements regarding no change in funeral attendee numbers for indoor funerals while opening up many other events and gatherings including major sporting events.

Cathy Tobin said "The Victorian Division of the Australian Funeral Directors Association questions the lack of equivalence between the way sport and other industries such as the funeral industry are treated by the Government when it comes to attendance rules.

"Up to 75,000 people can now attend an AFL game at the MCG for 3 or more hours at a time, 100 people can visit a house per day (any sized house with no density limits) and can even stay overnight, yet a funeral which often takes no more than 1 hour is still limited to the 2 metre square rule, meaning a chapel which usually has a seating capacity of 245 people can host funerals with only 100 people inside, with the overflow needing to stand outside."

Funeral directors across the country have been extremely diligent in making sure families abide by the rules since the COVID-19 pandemic began and are disheartened by this lack of consideration for families and friends of a lost one at their greatest time of need to be together and support one another.

The National President of AFDA, Adrian Barrett, said: "The past year has been challenging for our country, and for our industry in trying to navigate a 'new normal' whilst adhering to frequent changes to gathering restrictions. The impact of not being able to mourn the loss of a loved one with friends and family cannot be underestimated and should be more important than being able to attend a football match at the MCG. A funeral is a one-time event and is not available to attend again the following week.

"The mental health impact of not being able to be together, support one another and express emotions together is invaluablely comforting for families at the most difficult and the most painful time of their lives."

Adrian Barrett said: "Minimising unnecessary stress for families during this time should be a priority and we call on the Victorian government to lift funeral capacity restrictions in line with entertainment and sporting events."

The Australian Funeral Directors Association is the national peak industry body with members in every State and Territory representing approximately 60% of all deaths in Australia.

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