



AUSTRALIAN  
FUNERAL  
DIRECTORS  
ASSOCIATION

Australian Funeral Directors  
Association Limited  
Level 1, 700 High Street  
(PO Box 291)  
KEW EAST VIC 3102

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP  
Minister for Health  
GPO Box 5341 Sydney  
NSW 2001

14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Minister,

I am writing to bring to your attention to an issue that is of concern for those who work in the NSW funeral industry, and to propose a solution for your consideration based on successful approaches in other jurisdictions.

As the family owner of a fourth-generation funeral home with several locations in the Sydney metropolitan area, and as the Australian Funeral Directors Association NSW/ACT Divisional President, I have become increasingly concerned that my team, and all the other funeral directors and people employed by the industry, are not being adequately protected against the COVID-19 threat - despite being at greater risk to exposure compared to most. In communication with my international counterparts, it is interesting to see many overseas authorities recognise those employed in the funeral industry as essential workers, and as such have prioritised such workers for vaccination, *especially considering we are actually handling Covid infected deceased from the Hospital, to our mortuary and then placing in a coffin.*

In the United States, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention categorise those that work in the industry as Essential Health Care Workers, given that they have potential direct or indirect exposure to COVID. This means they were treated with the same priority as other health care providers, including Nursing Home staff, when it came to the COVID immunisation.

In the UK, those that worked in the industry were also recognised as essential workers – in the same way as doctors and nurses – and given priority for PCR testing and immunization against COVID. We understand that not only were they given priority, but that government departments facilitated the immunisation program at funeral homes.

In Australia however, we are not given any consideration for priority immunisation, with the health.gov.au website not listing funeral industry workers on the priority list.

At a minimum, the issue could be addressed by you including the industry in the list of priority groups, so that all funeral operators are able to be vaccinated in line with ATAGI recommendations as a matter of urgency. We believe this move is especially important given the nature of the Delta variant, and the need to minimise its spread.

To take this approach one step further, it is recommended that consideration be given to the UK model, with local area health services attending funeral homes to administer the vaccinations to all staff, which will require Federal and State cooperation.

I appreciate that there are no easy answers to the COVID issue and you have many high priority demands placed on you during this time, but I do trust that you will treat this as a crucial issue and act on it with some urgency. If you, or one of your staff, wish to discuss this further, please get in contact me on 0417 202645.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Maurer  
NSW/ACT President  
Australian Funeral Directors Association

Maurer Family Funerals  
574 Pacific Highway  
CHATSWOOD NSW 2067

365 Sydney Road  
BALGOWLAH NSW 2093