



# AUSTRALIAN FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

20 December 2021

Dr John Gerrard  
Queensland's Chief Health Officer

Dear Dr Gerrard

## **Management of Close Contacts Direction (No. 3)**

We write to you to express our concerns regarding the Management of Close Contacts Direction (No. 3). The Australia Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) is the national peak industry body with members in every State and Territory representing approximately 60% of all deaths in Australia and over 80% of all deaths in Queensland.

The Management of Close Contacts Direction (No. 3) states that 'A person who is informed that they are a close contact must quarantine until the end of the fourteenth day after the day on which the person last had close contact or until an earlier or later time as an emergency officer (public health) specifies in a direction under section 362G or 362H of the Public Health Act 2005'.

With the borders now open and the reality that there will be a significant increase in COVID cases, as other states have already experienced, there will also be a significant increase in close contacts as well.

AFDA member K.M. Smith Funeral Directors in Brisbane conducted a funeral on 15 December at which 50 mourners and four staff attended. The staff were all double vaccinated and wore masks however on Sunday 19 December the staff were informed that they were a close contact of a positive case that attended the funeral and they were directed to isolate for 14 days.

K.M. Smith Funeral Directors has since advised AFDA that if another mourner tests positive after attending a funeral, and more staff have to self-isolate for 14 days, they will have to close their business due to lack of sufficient staff to conduct future funerals or transfer bodies.

Funeral and cemetery/crematorium staff who become close contacts to the virus and have to self-isolate will give rise to a severely depleted funeral sector workforce in Queensland and this will be worse in regional Australia.

Many local funeral homes are family operated with a few staff and if they are deemed to be a close contact to the virus the capability to carry out transfers of deceased, funeral services, burials or cremations will be compromised - in some cases completely. Funeral homes in major cities face similar issues if many or all of their staff are absent. If funerals are delayed due to the absence of funeral and cemetery/crematorium staff and the storage of bodies accumulates, Queensland will soon face a funeral and storage crisis.

Deceased bodies will have to remain in the care of Queensland Health which will put serious pressure on mortuary storage facilities throughout the state.

*Promoting*

*professional*

*funeral standards*

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

ABN 33 007 331 580

Phone: (03) 9859 9966  
Fax: (03) 9819 7390  
Email:  
[info@afda.org.au](mailto:info@afda.org.au)  
Website:  
[www.afda.org.au](http://www.afda.org.au)

On 1 January 2022, the requirement for self-isolation of close contacts will be reviewed and we have been advised that it will be changed from 14 to 7 days. Given the risk that some funeral homes may be forced to close before this date and with the additional workload over the Christmas break adding to the problem, **AFDA urgently requests that this change becomes effective immediately.**

AFDA would also like the government to again consider previous recommendations by our Association that the funeral industry be treated as high-risk essential workers as are those who work in aged care and hospitals.

I look forward to your earliest response so AFDA can provide clarity and direction to our members as soon as possible.

For any further information, I can be contacted on (03) 9859 9966.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dale Gilson', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dale Gilson  
Chief Executive Officer