The Coroners Court in NSW

FACT SHEET 6

Cultural Protocols in Coronial Investigations

THIRRILI

This fact sheet explains the role of culture in a coronial inquest when a family member dies and who you can speak to for help getting the coroner to understand your traditions.

Making the coroner understand our sorry business and culture

- The Aboriginal Coronial Information and Support Program (ACISP) will contact you after the coroner decides to investigate your loved ones death, to talk about cultural and ceremonial matters. They will support you through the hearing.
- An ACISP Officer will talk to the coroner on your behalf to explain how the hearing can be run in a way that is culturally appropriate to the deceased person's family and community.

Visiting a deceased person

- The ACISP will work with the family around the viewing of the body (for more information, see Fact Sheet 8: My loved one's body and things).

Determining the deceased's country

- An ACISP Officer will consult with the deceased's next of kin to find out which tribal community the deceased person identified with and their community and kin connections.

Culturally significant items and Acknowledgment of Country

- You can request to hold ceremonies that are important to your family or tribal community, such as a smoking ceremony. You can also ask for symbols or items that are of cultural significance to the deceased or their family to be displayed. You can also ask for a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country. Speak to the ACISP Officer about what you would like included.

Smoking ceremony at an inquest

- An ACISP Officer can help to ask for a smoking ceremony.

Using the name and images/videos of the deceased

- The coroner will listen to what the family wants the deceased person to be called during the hearing. You should tell the ACISP Officer what name the family would like used.
- There may be images and voice recordings of your family member used during the hearing. Coroners in NSW look to create a culturally safe environment and are mindful of sensitive material. They will usually have a discussion with you and your family prior to the start of an inquest to hear your view.

Next of kin

- For information, see Fact Sheet 5: Next of Kin and the Coroners Court.

Language

- An ACISP Officer will be available to assist with any of your own language needs during the proceedings. They can communicate any of your translation requirements directly to the coroner.

This information was last updated in December 2024 and does not constitute legal advice.

More help

- The Aboriginal Coronial Information and Support Program can be contacted via phone or email:(02) 8584 7777 or at ACISP@dcj.nsw.gov.au
- The Aboriginal Coronial Information and Support Program of the Coroners Court can be contacted via phone or email: (02) 8584 7777 or at ACISP@dcj.nsw.gov.au