The Coroners Court in NT

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 if you need help getting the coroner to understand your traditions.

Making the coroner understand our sorry business and culture

- If an inquest is held, the first stage is a directions hearing, in which the coroner will ask family members to make submissions on any issues they wish – this can be used as an opportunity to tell the coroner about what customs you would like to be observed during the process.

Visiting a deceased person

- The next of kin and anyone with a sufficient interest (as determined by the coroner) can view the body.

Country obligations

- Submissions can be made to the coroner regarding Country obligations however the coroner is not bound to observe them.

Smoking ceremony at an inquest

- You or your lawyers can contact the court staff in advance of the hearing to try to request this.

Culturally significant items and acknowledgment of country

- You or your lawyers can contact the court staff in advance of the hearing to request the display of culturally significant items and a specific acknowledgement to country.

Using the name and images/videos of the deceased

- The deceased's next of kin can request that the name of the deceased person not be used. A similar request can also be made for photos or videos to not be used.

Next of kin

- Determining the next of kin involves a consideration of who is a decision maker or family, according to the customs and traditions of the deceased's community (for more information, see Fact Sheet 5: Next of Kin and the Coroner's Office)..

Language

- You or your lawyers can contact the court staff (see below for contact details) in advance of the hearing to try to organise an interpreter who speaks your language at the hearing.

Men's or women's business during the coronial hearing

- You can make submissions to the coroner regarding men's or women's business, but the coroner is not bound to observe them.

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

More help

- The Coroner's Office of the Northern Territory can be contacted via phone or email: (08) 8999 7770 or at nt.coroner@nt.gov.au
- Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission can be contacted via phone: 1300 019 343
- North Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency can be contacted via phone: 1800 898 251
- Darwin Community Legal Service can be contacted via phone: 1300 860 529
- If you are struggling with the death of a loved one, you can call 13YARN (13 92 76) for free support