

Updated September 2023

Burial without a conventional coffin

Conventional coffins or caskets are commonly used for burials in NSW but there are other options available that can meet cultural requirements or personal preferences.

Options for burial in NSW

A person may have a religious, spiritual, or cultural reason for burial without a coffin, or it may be a personal preference. Regardless of the reason, it is possible, with the appropriate permissions, to be buried in NSW without a conventional coffin. Growing numbers of NSW consumers and families are seeking alternative options for burial which meet their beliefs, values, and preferences.

The following options are increasingly available, can be used at conventional cemeteries, and can be discussed with a funeral director:

- caskets made of willow, wicker or wool;
- cardboard coffins, which can include customisable designs;
- biodegradable scattering tubes, earth urns, corn starch urns or salt urns;
- biodegradable burial suits made from mushrooms and other micro-organisms; or
- burial shrouds made from biodegradable material, such as 100% cotton, bamboo, linen, or wool.

If you wish to have a shrouded burial, there are additional steps that need to be taken:

Steps required in NSW to be buried in a shroud

In NSW, a conventional coffin or casket is required for burial or cremation. However, an application can be made to NSW Health for an exemption to be buried of a deceased person in a grave outside of a coffin (for more information click [Burial of a deceased person in a grave without a coffin - Fact sheets \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) and for the application form click [burial-without-coffin.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)). This is commonly called 'shroud burial' or 'shrouded burial' because the body is placed in a shroud rather than a coffin.

Some cemeteries in NSW have arrangements in place for certain community or religious groups, meaning an individual exemption is not required. Please check with the cemetery operator to see if there is an arrangement in place as you may not need to complete the application.

The application asks if you have negotiated and reached agreement with the cemetery operator who has agreed to carry out the burial. NSW Health suggests that this step take place before completing the application form.

A family member, funeral director or cemetery operator can seek approval for an exemption from NSW Health on your behalf. Funeral directors and cemetery operators can help you develop your shrouded burial plans, or those of your loved ones. These plans must include the use of a coffin until such time as the body is placed into a grave.

Contact details

More information can be provided from Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW

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