



MAGISTRATES COURT of TASMANIA

CORONIAL DIVISION

24 December 2025

The Coronial Division has developed these guidelines to assist any member of the public in requesting and accessing photos taken at autopsy and post-mortem reports.

In Tasmania, a post-mortem, or autopsy, is a medical examination of a body performed by a pathologist to determine the cause of death. It is typically directed by a coroner if a doctor cannot issue a medical certificate or if the death circumstances are suspicious, unknown, or unnatural. The family can, however, object to the procedure in writing.

What it is an autopsy,

- A detailed external and internal examination of a deceased person's body by a forensic pathologist to establish the medical cause of death.
- An examination by the forensic pathologist may involve only an external examination and is not usually referred to as an autopsy.
- During an autopsy or during external examination, the forensic pathologist may additionally extract microscopic tissue and bodily fluids for examination as the results of analysis may be important in determining cause of death.
- Often the official report of the autopsy findings written by the pathologist after the examination is called an "autopsy report" or "post-mortem report".

When it is done

- Often, an autopsy or other post-mortem examinations are required when a person's general practitioner is unwilling or unable to sign a death certificate.
- An autopsy (involving internal examination of the body) is directed by a coroner if this procedure is necessary for determining cause of death.

What to expect

- A Coroner must issue a direction under the *Coroners Act* 1995 for an autopsy to proceed.

- The procedure is conducted by the forensic pathologist and staff with dignity and respect for the deceased.
- The autopsy report or post-mortem report is critical in providing the coroner with advice on cause of death and will inform the coroner's decision in how to further investigate the case. It may also be that, in some cases, the coroner will require no further investigation of the case after considering the report. For example, in some cases the death is determined to be due to natural causes.
- The person who is the senior next of kin can object in writing to an autopsy being performed. If the senior next of kin is considering an objection, it is important to contact the Coroners Office immediately as time limits apply.
- Results can take time. A preliminary report of interim findings may be issued quickly, but the final report, after all test results are available, can take much longer.
- The autopsy report or post-mortem report is a highly specialised document and contains complex medical terminology. If the families of the deceased person wish to view the report we recommend engaging with a medical practitioner of their choosing, who will guide them through the report and explain the contents. Medical practitioners have access to free interpreting services and so this can be very helpful in the case of a person whose first language is not English.

The *Coroners Act* 1995 has been amended to include s58C that requires coronial records may be provided directly to the senior next-of-kin in certain circumstances.

There are also other considerations that are a matter for the Coroner to determine, including the following:

- The decision not to grant a request for a record if the coroner is satisfied on reasonable grounds that it would be contrary to the public interest to release the record due to the release having an unreasonable intrusion on the privacy of another person, other than the deceased person to which the request relates.
- Releasing the record in redacted form.

How to access

You will need to complete a Form 3 – [Application to Access Coronial Records](#) and submit to the Coronial Division for consideration by the Coroner.

It is recommended that you only seek the autopsy images if they have a specific purpose or value to you beyond an interest in or reminder of the deceased.

How long

Applicants advised that any Form 3 – [Application to Access Coronial Records](#) is done in a timely manner, there may be delays depending on the complexity of the matter and the amount of redaction required, if any. Our office will contact you once the Coroner has made a determination and a time frame provided. In respect of a coronial record, the coronial authority must provide a copy of the record to the person who made the request within 28 days after the request is made or such later period as agreed between the person and the coronial authority.

Next Steps

If your application is granted, we will liaise with you in relation to providing the material. In the case of post-mortem reports and images/photos taken at autopsy our Court staff are not medically trained, nor do they have the medical expertise to be able to interpret these documents for you, and as a result will not be shown in a file viewing with our Coronial Liaison Officer.

Things to be aware of

Photos/Images

The images may show both the external appearances and the internal organs after they have been examined and, in many cases, removed from the body. The photos will show the extent of any injuries, diseases, or other abnormalities. Autopsy images are graphic and distressing.

The imagery may include:

- The body as it arrives at the mortuary.
- Specific injuries or wounds with close up detail and scale
- Signs of disease or medical procedures
- The internal organs during examination to demonstrate specific findings.

It is rare for the images to have any evidentiary value in addition to the autopsy report or post-mortem report and as a result are not usually viewed by the coroner.

The court recommends that families seek counselling before viewing potentially distressing or graphic images. There is no trained counsellor in the Coronial Division.

Services that can help

Below is a list of services you can access including counsellors, specialist teams and 24-hour support services. There is also a list of information sheets to help you cope with grief and loss. They include information on how to help other people (such as children and teenagers) to get through the grieving process.

- Grief and Loss Counsellor (business hours) – If reportable death occurred during hospital admission.
 - South (Royal Hobart Hospital) – (03) 6166 8344
 - North (Launceston General Hospital) – (03) 6777 6245
- [Lifeline](#) (immediate counselling and assistance, 24 hours a day): 13 11 14
- [Kids Help Line](#) (immediate counselling and assistance, 24 hours a day): 1800 55 1800
- [Mens Line Australia](#) (immediate counselling and support, 24 hours a day): 1300 78 99 78
- [QLife line](#) (support for LGBTQI, other sexuality, sex and gender diverse people – 3pm to 12am every day): 1800 184 527
- [Standby Response Service](#) (crisis response for people bereaved by suicide):
 - Monday to Friday call (03) 6282 1519
 - To access a 24-hour mobile: 0400 183 490
 - Email: standby.south@lifelinetasmania.org.au
- GPs (doctors / general practitioners) can:
 - set up a Mental Health Treatment Plan, to help people improve their mental health after a traumatic event, and
 - refer people to a psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker so that they can receive ongoing support (you can get rebates for ten individual and ten group psychology sessions per calendar year).

- For more information on this service, go to the Australian Government Department of Health web site, and read the Better Access to Mental Health Care: fact sheet for patients.
- [Suicide Call-back Service](#) (free counselling for anyone affected by suicide): 1300 659 467
- SIDS and Kids (bereavement support and education, 24 hours a day): 1300 308 307
- [Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement](#), information and support services for those suffering through grief and bereavement
 - Phone: 1800 642 066
- [Road Trauma Support](#) TAS offers assistance and support for people affected by motor vehicle crashes
 - Phone: (03) 6777 6252
- Victims of Crime Service [Victims Support Services](#) provides personal support and counselling. The service office hours are 8:45 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday
 - Hobart: (03) 6165 7524
 - Launceston: (03) 6777 2939
 - Burnie: (03) 6477 7133
- Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre [Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre](#) provides support services for Aboriginal Australians
- The [Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania](#) provide support services for migrants, humanitarian entrants and refugees
- [The Trauma and Grief Network \(TGN\)](#) provides support for families dealing with grief and loss
- The [National Missing Persons](#) provides support and assistance for friends and relatives of missing persons
- The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services [Mental health | Tasmanian Department of Health](#) page has links to lots of different support services and advice.

- Red Nose - Provide support to anyone impacted by the death of a baby or child during pregnancy, birth, infancy and early childhood -[Grief & Bereavement Support After the Loss of a Child](#)