

## Respecting practices and beliefs of Indigenous Australians

*While communities may share common beliefs, there is no 'standard' death ritual or funeral practice observed by all Indigenous Australians. Cultural practices vary widely between different communities, and individuals may also have their own preferences.*

### Interment in cemeteries

#### Cemeteries run by Local Aboriginal Land Councils

A number of Local Aboriginal Land Councils operate cemeteries and are ideally placed to ensure that the cultural wishes of the deceased person are understood.

Local Aboriginal Land Councils can also provide useful information for other cemetery operators about particular cultural practices and beliefs of local Aboriginal communities.

#### Public cemeteries

Cemetery operators should find out whether any relevant cultural or religious practices apply when offering services for deceased Indigenous peoples.

For example, a common cultural practice and belief for many Aboriginal people includes returning the body to the earth, with:

- a perpetual burial
- burial at sufficient depth.

Cremation is also gaining acceptance, depending on individual preference.

### Interment on country

Many Indigenous Australians prefer for the deceased to be returned to country.

## More information

Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW is a statutory body created under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*, providing a strategic and coordinated approach for operators providing interment services in NSW.

For general information visit the website at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/ccnsw](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/ccnsw)

Email: [ccnsw.info@cemeteries.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ccnsw.info@cemeteries.nsw.gov.au)

### National parks

Indigenous Australians can be buried within national parks depending on the park management guidelines for the particular park.

Contact the Office of Environment and Heritage to discuss this option.

### Native title land

Where native title over land has been recognised, the native title holders may have rights to perform traditional ceremonies on the land including burials.

An indigenous land use agreement can be made even if native title has not yet been settled and may provide for burials of Aboriginal peoples.

### Private land

Persons can be buried on private lands subject to public health requirements and local government permissions.

## Aboriginal heritage sites

The Office of Environment and Heritage maintains the Aboriginal Sites Register.

The register is used to protect Aboriginal heritage sites, including former missions, reserve cemeteries and lone Aboriginal gravesites.