

**1 September 2021**

## **Funeral Directors Association welcomes Government change of heart**

The Funeral Directors Association this morning announced that it welcomes the Government's change of heart over viewings of the deceased at Alert Level 4.

"Last week we sent a proposal to Dr Bloomfield and the Prime Minister seeking a change to allow viewings to farewell a loved one under Alert Level 4," said Gary Taylor, President of the Funeral Directors Association "and when we checked the Ministry of Health website this morning we were delighted to see they have accepted it."

From this morning, 1st September, viewings by family and whānau are allowed at a registered funeral home during Alert Level 4, but only if they are in the same bubble. The tūpāpaku may not be transported from the funeral home for viewing purposes at any time.

"There are other conditions for funeral directors," said David Moger, Chief Executive of the Funeral Directors Association "and they are all in line with our proposal except for one. There is a requirement that the funeral director supervising the viewing must be fully vaccinated. This is problematic because when we asked for early access to the vaccination programme for funeral directors as an essential service earlier this year, we were denied."

The Funeral Directors Association asked the Government for access to the vaccination programme for funeral directors in March 2021 but were denied by the Ministry of Health in late April 2021, citing limited community transmission as the reason along with the fact that funeral directors are not deemed to be an essential health service.

"This means that the number of funeral directors available that are now fully vaccinated is limited," Moger said "and we are trying to assess what impact that delay will have had on today's announcement."

"We do believe that our Members should be regarded as an essential health service and that if they were, this problem would not have occurred." He said. "We have renewed that call to the Prime Minister and Dr Bloomfield this morning." Moger added.

As well as conditions for funeral directors there are also conditions for families which must:

- be from the same bubble as the tūpāpaku
- wear masks inside the funeral home and maintain physical distancing
- not touch the tūpāpaku
- not have symptoms of COVID-19
- not be waiting for a COVID-19 test
- not be required to be in isolation or be under a Section 70 Order.

“We are issuing urgent guidance to our Members this morning to put this opportunity for families into effect in a safe and secure manner.” Moger said.

Taylor added “This will be a huge relief for those families in Alert Level 4 who are now able to at least see their loved one at peace after our Members have cared for them and we thank the Government for listening and accepting our proposal. This change of heart by the Government as Auckland and Northland continue under Alert Level 4 is very positive.”

ENDS

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The Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand represents funeral directing companies that undertake the majority of funerals in New Zealand. They are a group of caring professionals who are committed to ensuring that the families they serve receive high-quality funeral service. For more information, visit our website: [www.funeraldirectors.co.nz](http://www.funeraldirectors.co.nz)