

**Approaches to Death,
Funeral Rites and
Memorialisation in
Contemporary Australia:
Changes and Continuities**

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Preface

Cemeteries in Victoria were planned and designed 150 years ago, without any major developments taking place since. Large numbers of baby-boomers, as well as migrants of a similar age, are now at a stage where end-of-life plans come into view. However, their needs of funeral rites require reassessment due to a significantly different socio-cultural context where social norms are shifting and environmental resources are scarce. Considering the aging population and the contexts of 'religion, space and economic rationalisation', the new cultural differences and changing religious affiliations are likely to be reflected on public preferences in relation to funeral rites.

Australia's population was 24,385,600 as at December 2016, an increase of 372,800 since December 2015 (ABS 2017). Migration has contributed significantly to this increase with Victoria experiencing the largest level of growth (2.4%). Migrant increases have led to religious shifts that were particularly noticeable in Melbourne, Victoria. There is an urgent need to re-engage with cemetery planning for the immediate future and beyond. Understanding contemporary, and future, funeral needs of a culturally diverse population in Australia is of critical importance to government and the funeral industry. Yet, we are not informed of a systematic appreciation of these changes and their implications for future planning and design of cemeteries. With increasingly limited access to usable land suitable for burial practices – particularly in metropolitan areas – future planning must consider the funeral rites of both the existing aging population and incoming migrant groups most likely to make end of life choices in the coming decades.

This study focuses on three specific groups that were identified in consultation with our partner organisations (Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulation Unit and Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust) as most in need of understanding their specific characteristics in terms of funeral rites. The three groups include: Baby Boomers, Christians, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse population.

We would like to express our gratitude to the industry partners: The Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulation Unit (Department of Health and Human Services, The Victorian Government) and The Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust. These partner organisations have not only provided the required funding but also their genuine interest and support for the project. Mr Bryan Crampton, Manager of Cemetery Sector Governance Support Program, immediately recognised the value of our initial proposal. He is keen to provide all Victorians with up-to-date community-oriented and sustainable best practice and share the knowledge garnered from the project across Australia more broadly.

Mr Crampton's enthusiasm and support for the project has been far more than most researchers would hope to experience. Ms Jane Glover, CEO, Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust, has been equally enthusiastic and supportive. Her efforts and passion for helping those who have lost their loved ones create the most meaningful experiences and memories are commendable. Ms Niloo Amendra, Director of Strategy and Communication, SMCT, has displayed meaningful and caring commitment to providing diverse and rich experiences to Victorians, and we highly appreciate her insights and support. Mr William Babington, Community Engagement and Insights Manager, has brought enormous enthusiasm, commitment and insights to the project. His depth of knowledge of the cemetery sector in Victoria and beyond has been a significant asset for the project team. He is the author of the chapter on the findings from the quantitative survey. We are truly grateful to William and believe we have had the best possible experience of working with both industry and government organisations. All the research partners demonstrated a clear commitment to putting 'the community's needs first, not the profit.'

We gratefully acknowledge the support we have received, when preparing the grant application, from Ms Bev Baugh and Ms Vanja Radojevic at the Arts Research and Business Development Office at Monash University. Ms Judith McGinnes and Ms Priya Devadason provided us with superb assistance with the transcription of the interview data. Most importantly, the project could not be undertaken without the study participants' contributions. Their voices truly represent the voices of the Australian community, yearning for the improvement of the quality of the final journeys of all Australians.

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Baby Boomers

'Baby Boomers' (BB) formed the largest group in the study. The group of 59 participants was identified as born between 1946 and 1964 and was culturally diverse. The BB group indicated that they were becoming more aware of the different options and choices they could have when it came to funeral rites and memorialisation. Many had dealt with death in some way and at some point of their life leading up to participating in the study. They revealed dissatisfaction with the commercialisation of funeral arrangements and memorialisation and desired greater choice and flexibility about funeral and memorialisation practices. These desires are explained in this report under five sections including awareness of cemeteries, access to information, preferences, decision-making and values.

Awareness of cemeteries

BBs were asked about their experiences with cemeteries. Experience with cemeteries varied with the most distinct difference being between BBs and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) BBs from different migrant backgrounds. Anglo¹ BBs indicated that they were much less likely to visit cemeteries other than for a funeral service. They tended to have negative views of cemeteries based on past recollections of neglected cemeteries, sometimes in country areas. Exceptions included an interviewee who was recently bereaved and another who worked in the industry. Both found the cemetery peaceful and comforting. It was notable that CALD BBs had a far more positive attitude towards cemeteries even if they did not have family or friends memorialised there. CALD BBs generally appreciated the beautiful and peaceful surrounds.

Access to information

The participants were asked if they had planned a loved-one's funeral. They were asked if they were aware of what options were available and from where they sought information. They were also asked to comment on issues of trust in relation to the information source. Generally, many indicated that they would go to local funeral directors, while some indicated the use of online information. Most

¹ The terms 'Anglo', 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Anglo Australian' are used in this report to reflect the self-identification of many of the research participants in the study. We acknowledge that there are diverse ways to refer to people's diverse ethnic backgrounds. Using the terms, based on race rather than culture and ethnicity, is highly contentious (see Han, 2016b).

tended to follow their instincts and were concerned about being exploited at a vulnerable time. Funeral directors, in some instances, were thought to have ‘this very sort of aggressive business approach’. Despite many interviewees indicating that they would first seek guidance from the local funeral directors, these service providers tended to be negatively viewed.

There was an evident need for more choice to be visibly available on the market to allow for creativity. While Anglo BBs tended to seek information from funeral directors, CALD BBs tended to refer such matters back to their own ethnic and cultural community (for example, Chinese, Greek and Jewish communities) rather than contact mainstream institutions such as funeral directors.

Preferences

Interviewees were asked if they had thought about their final wishes and whether or not they would follow family traditions. They were also asked what aspects were important to them, if they had preference for cremation or burial and where would be their preferred resting place.

Most had thought about their final wishes and these thoughts tended to follow the loss of a family member. Most indicated that they would do things differently to their parents. For Baby Boomers, choices generally needed to reflect the individual rather than tradition. This trend was the case for both Anglo and CALD BBs, but for the latter group to a lesser extent. Overall, most interviewees indicated that they preferred cremation. One of the reasons for this choice was that ashes allowed for mobility, which reflected the interviewees’ mobile lives and the contemporary mobile world. Another reason for the choice of cremation was that there tended to be more importance placed on the spirit rather than the body. One major finding was that there was often a preference for disposal options outside the confines of the cemetery. The preference for options outside the cemetery for many meant choosing a meaningful final resting place, or a place to conduct their grieving and memorialisation. Scattering ashes at a meaningful place was the most frequently mentioned alternative mode of memorialisation.

Decision making

To understand how the Baby Boomer group made decisions and end-of-life (EoL) plans, a series of related questions were asked. These included whether or not they thought planning funerals and memorialisation was important. They were also asked if there was anything preventing them from making such decisions and/or if they had any thoughts about when, or if, they may start planning.

If they had already made plans they were asked what aspects this included and what had prompted them to plan. It was found that planning was important to some, but not all, and that loss of a partner or family member often triggered planning. Many seemed reluctant to commit to a plan due to changing circumstances.

Also, in some instances, it was indicated by the interviewees that they would like more time to think about different memorialisation options. Further, BBs wanted more choice including less traditional options, particularly among the Anglo group. It was clear that it was difficult for many to make decisions when in a vulnerable state.

Values

Interviewees were asked what key values in their life they would like reflected in their funeral rites. If they seemed unsure how to answer they were also asked if these key values were evident at other major life events, such as a wedding or the birth of a child, for example. The responses corresponded across most interviewees regardless of background and faith. Poignant examples included 'Good thoughts, good works, good deeds' and 'Do as much as you can. Help as much as you can'. Desirable attributes included having a positive outlook on life, openness, trust, honesty, respect for others' beliefs and wishes, concern and support for family and others, and concern for environment.

Conclusion and recommendations

The group was as diverse as were their end-of-life wishes. It was clear that generally culturally diverse groups (aside from ethnic Indians and others who prefer the scattering of ashes) are more likely to look for cemetery space. They see the space as a privilege that they may not have previously had in their original country. Anglo-Saxon Baby Boomers showed strong tendencies towards scattering ashes at a 'favourite place' outside the cemetery. They want choice and individuality. They indicated a concern for the environment that was not always well-informed and evident in their choices. That is, there seemed to be a need for much greater education about what was environmentally sustainable, as decisions seemed to be based on assumptions rather than fact.

There was strong evidence of hybridisation; that is, blended cultures but also some quite distinct traditions and cultural values that extended to decisions about funeral rites and memorialisation. Anglo-Saxon Baby Boomers were requiring less cemetery space that was eagerly being sought by CALD groups who appreciated the availability of burial space. By choosing disposal methods outside the cemetery, Anglo Baby Boomers are unintentionally enabling the diversity of cemeteries.

This is a key insight that will be further explored at a later stage. Generally, there appeared to be a lag between what is desired and what is provided and permitted within legislation.

Recommendations

- To increase awareness of cemeteries, develop and provide greater education opportunities of funeral rites and memorialisation options for Baby Boomers.
- Increase access to information about funerals and cemeteries so that Baby Boomers can make informed choices.
- Provide more information about environmentally sustainable practices so that Baby Boomers are correctly informed.
- Increase services offered so that a broader range of Baby Boomer preferences can be accommodated.
- Baby Boomer's increasing preference for cremation suggests new environmentally safe ways of scattering ashes should be provided both within and outside the cemetery grounds.
- Adopt practices that allow more time for Baby Boomers to have flexibility with choices.

1.2 Christian Funeral and Memorialisation

Ever since the formation of the Federation of Australia with the large flow of Europeans in addition to the native settlers in Australia, Australian funeral rites and memorialisation have developed largely on the basis of the Christian traditions, which have been predominant for a long time. However, the process of secularisation, which is a contentious concept, has swept through all sectors of Australian society. Funeral rites and memorialisation have not been an exception.

Awareness of Death and Cemeteries

The human quest to understand the meaning of life and death has been present in society from time immemorial. Christians' efforts to fulfil this quest are not distinctly different from the other two groups in the broader project. There are two cultures co-existing in terms of participants' understanding of death: death denying and death accepting cultures. Participants shared their observation that some of their acquaintances were reluctant to discuss death or prepare for their own funeral services, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds. Relatedly, medical and social services are generally geared towards saving life. However, all the participants were prepared to discuss the funerals of their own or their families and friends, as proven by their participation in the research project.

The role of the cemetery to the participants remained highly significant although a small, but increasing, proportion of the broader group preferred to seek alternative places for the purpose of memorialisation.

Participants' perception and expectation of the cemetery was of a significantly meaningful place. It was expected to be peaceful, in a natural milieu, for the deceased who may have gone through a period of illness and suffering.

A desired type of cemetery was thought to resemble a beautiful park that offered the visitors leisure. That is, the living considers the cemetery to be a place for them rather than the deceased. Participants preferred an opportunity to choose the cemetery for their own future use. That is, one that has meaningful elements such as associated memories, prior memorialisation of their acquaintances, close proximity to home, family members other connections.

Participants were seeking alternatives to the cemetery, rather than strictly sticking to traditional burial within it. That is, memorialisation in the cemetery or religious boundary in the cemetery was considered not necessary. Secularisation and loose family ties may be influential factors.

There was an increasing interest in genealogy through the services offered at the cemeteries. The need for bereavement support seemed to be increasingly recognised.

Recommendations

- Ascertain and provide relevant facilities for the needs of those who are increasingly interested in genealogy in the cemetery.
- Continue to improve the cemetery environment as a park for the public to reflect, rest and have leisure.

Access to Information

Attending the funeral services of friends and acquaintances remain the most important kind of rituals in society and the most important source of information. Participants considered funerals to be more significant than many other celebratory occasions such as weddings. The funerals offered the participants an opportunity to reflect on their personal lives and value the human relationships that they have developed and nurtured through their lifetime. Inevitable consequences included their learning about what funeral services entail, and how they can be prepared and carried out.

The question of whether or not there is enough information about preparing for the funeral was divided among the participants. However, those who diligently sought the information felt that there was enough.

Recommendation

- Increase the public awareness of what the funeral entails and how it can be prepared.

Preferences: Burial and Cremation

Christians undoubtedly preferred a religious funeral and see the church still taking a critical and comforting role in the whole process of the funeral services. The priest still held a key role in the process. Some participants appreciated the opportunity for a low-cost memorialisation etched on a brick or in a garden within the church property. A good proportion of participants, including some Asian migrants, preferred full-body burial compared with cremation, in a cemetery with their own community connection.

However, the broad culture of body disposal is shifting from burial to cremation. Participants appreciated the options available to them in the individualistic, rather than collectivistic, Australian society irrespective of Christian traditions that might have been in practice for decades.

Christians tended to not believe that there is any orthodox way to dispose of the deceased, but rather that there were diverse alternatives. Cremation was considered environmentally friendly, particularly by using fewer resources or taking up less portion of land. Cremains were often left or memorialised in places other than the cemetery, for example, in a garage, river, ocean, or sky – returning to the universe or meaningful places.

Pre-purchasing a plot for burial or columbarium was fairly common among a limited proportion of the people, but most were unaware of this practice.

Recommendation

- The general decrease in full-body burial, increase in cremation and the public desire for alternative body disposal and memorialisation may be considered in planning the cemetery spaces.
- Consider the possibility of diverse and alternative memorialisation.

Decision Making

Preparing a will and allocating the power of attorney for a funeral was a common and desired practice among the participants. Pre-paid funeral service insurance is becoming common as well. An important reason was to unburden their children on the occasion of death. Migrants' integration into Australian society has led to the adoption of the 'Australian' funeral. Nonetheless, migrants tend to incorporate their past home country's cultural elements in their funerals.

Christians believed that a funeral should reflect on the value of the deceased and the family. They regarded the funeral as an occasion to celebrate the well-lived life of the deceased.

Participants were relaxed about how the funeral was conducted rather than desiring a 'rigid' and religious funeral. Yet, they were unsure about the details of their own funeral. A limited proportion of participants were aware of the need for advanced care directive.

Recommendation

- Increase the public awareness of the advanced care directive.

Values: Changes to the Broader Culture

Participants noted that their funeral rites ought to reflect on their most significant values. The current process of secularisation and the change of Christian traditions/cultures were well reflected on the current practices of funeral rites, memorialisation and use of the cemetery.

For example, an increasingly significant number of 'Christians' remained Christian without regularly attending a church or were much less attached to the church as an organisation. These changes reflected on the culture of funeral rites.

Another important reason that funeral practices are in transition in many significant ways is due to people's environmental awareness. Pursuing environmentally green funerals was well embedded in the minds of the research participants, for example, using a cardboard coffin and awareness of limited resources such as land space.

Recommendation

- Enhance the public awareness of the environmentally friendly approach to the funeral and memorialisation.

1.3 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Group's Funeral and Memorialisation: the transforming sense of self and belonging

The CALD category consists of individuals who came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia. As Australia has become more culturally and ethnically diverse over the past few decades, the funeral rites and practices among the CALD communities have gradually shaped the general landscape of death, mourning and memorialisation.

Awareness of Death and Cemeteries

To the research participants of the CALD communities, death and cemeteries remain inseparable as the cemetery continues to exert significant cultural meaning to these communities. It is important to note that the formation of CALD communities relied on immigration, in which migrants brought their previous experience and cultural and emotional attachment to cemeteries to Australia. Many participants of the CALD category brought their perception and imagination about cemeteries from their home country to make sense of the local cemeteries in Australia, which also facilitate them to perform cultural comparison and adjustment.

While most participants were happy with the concept of the management and design of the Australian cemeteries (such as gardens, landscaping and the integration into people's everyday lives), others found the facilities and services offered had limited their options to perform their respective funeral rites and memorialisation practices. Nonetheless, all participants expressed appreciation of the inclusiveness and openness of Australian cemeteries in general.

Access to Information

Due to linguistic and cultural barriers, access to the relevant information about death and dying, memorialisation and mourning remained a significant issue amongst the CALD communities. There were two types of CALD: the more-structured communities and the less-structured communities. Those communities in the former category have a dominant cultural institution present in Australia – examples include the Orthodox Church, a Muslim mosque and the Jewish Chevra Kadisha. The less-structured communities, on the other hand, do not have a dominant cultural institution in Australia. Members of the more-structured communities tended to adhere to the traditional format more consistently. Whereas members of the less-structured communities tended to take an individualised approach, as some would go back to the orthodox traditions, others had a more individualised and culturally hybridised approach.

The study found that participants who belonged to the more-structured CALD communities did not have many difficulties with obtaining information before, or when, death occurred in a family. However, participants of the less-structured CALD communities had a more diverse and fragmented experience. Unless the individual had personally arranged a funeral or happened to work in the health and medical industry, participants of the less-structured communities found it difficult to obtain the relevant information.

Preferences

The preferences among members of the more-structured CALD community placed greater emphasis on being able to maintain their cultural traditions as much as possible whereas members of the less-structured CALD community had a more individualised cultural preference, associated with socioeconomic needs and desires. Nonetheless, most participants in the CALD category expressed clear preference of 'resting in Australia' – a clear indication of their newly developed sense of belonging as a result of family, work, and lifestyle preferences. In other words, by gaining insights into CALD communities' preferences of funeral rites and memorialisation one could also learn about their respective relationship with the mainstream Australian society on the one hand and their values (to be discussed) of living in Australia on the other.

Again, cemeteries remained as a significant site for members of the CALD communities to perform and fulfil their preferences, and this was true regardless of the structure of the community. Participants belonging to the more-structured communities expressed the importance of being able to be buried/memorialised 'together' with their people (such as a separate Jewish cemetery), whereas participants belonging to the less-structured communities were more concerned about how they could fulfil their cultural or personal values.

Decision Making

To participants of the CALD community, the 'decision' generally meant the 'final resting place' rather than details or format of the funerals. For participants of the more-structured communities, they had little or no concern about the actual format or mode of memorialisation because the community generally had consensus. Importantly, there would always be someone to refer to (such as a church minister or a community leader) when death occurred. Since the format of most of the funerals and the mode of memorialisation were relatively fixed, participants of the more-structured community thought little about making any advanced decision besides stating that they would like a 'traditional funeral.' For example, the term, a Jewish funeral, would have already indicated many details and processes and even the contact person when death occurred.

For participants of the less-structured community, they mainly focused on clearly stating their final resting place – in Australia or back home. The decision or indecision on this matter dominated many participants' interviews, where they had to consider their cultural traditions, the socioeconomic realities (whether it is more affordable and if it is possible to ship the body back), lifestyle choice (where to retire), yet most importantly, where their children would be in the future.

Values

Participants connected their decisions, preferences and perception about cemeteries and funeral rites to their respective values. In addition to one's cultural/religious and personal values, the study notes that the journey of migration had the most profound implication in shaping one's values relating to EoL matters. Although all participants demonstrated some 'surface values' such as family, social equality, simplistic and environmentalism, there was another layer of 'deeper value' that underlined most participants' decision and preference – that is, their sense of belonging to the Australian society and way of life. To most of the participants, that was cultural diversity and inter-cultural acceptance and harmony.

Funeral rites and memorialisation seemed to provide the opportunity for these participants to reflect on their values. Rather than merely hoping to exert and express one's own, traditional values, all our participants expressed the need for cultural adjustment and the fact that they need to live with other cultural and religious communities in Australia.

2. Literature Review – the state of the field

Death is both inevitable and indispensable in human society. Ruth McManus (2012) considers death to be 'integral to life' in any culture and society. Managing the expectation, logistics and imagination of death have been a central aspect of society that intertwines with production and transformation of public culture and social relations across societies and cultures (Stevenson, Kenten, and Maddrell 2016). As a result, the topic of death, although it is often deemed as taboo and sensitive in everyday discourse, has attracted a lot of interest from diverse disciplines. Overall, studies about death and the associated end-of-life (EoL) matters generally focus on three areas: (1) EoL, (2) dying, death and grieving, and (3) cemetery and memorialisation. Across these three areas of inquiry current knowledge can be divided into the following three categories based on their respective line of inquiry and research approach:

1. The medical and psychological research that focuses on the biological and emotional management and wellbeing relating to death and EoL (Candib 2002; Matsumura *et al.* 2002; Gerst and Burr 2008, Morris *et al.* 2015).
2. The sociology of death, which concerns how social relations and structures produce and are being reproduced by the discourse, ritual and imagination about death and EoL (Kong, 1999; Lee, 2015; Maddree and Sidaway, 2017; Clement, 2017).
3. Finally, the third stream of research is the cross-disciplinary, collaborated inquiry between the academia and the industry, with the intention to produce insights to support the development, revision and delivery of public policies and business strategies in the relevant business sectors (van der Laan and Moerman, 2017; Swerissen and Duckett, 2014).

In addition, there are some other streams of studies coming from the demographic analysis (Najman, 2000; Haysli and Peveto, 2005), which, for example, use social-cultural approaches (such as the changing nature of religious practices, social orientations) to make sense of the medical statistics (such as the rate of mortality and fertility). The demographic research is often embedded in the three main streams of studies outlined since demographic changes serve as the fundamental context and concept to study the changes and transformations of death and EoL-related matters in any society and culture. This is not a key area of foci in this study.

Mapping death and EoL in Australia

Following on from the above-mentioned categories of research, past studies published in the English language mainly deal with either the British or American context. In other words, data and findings presented in the available research in English, regardless of its disciplinary origin, anchor their discussions and reflections within these two contexts. The US-UK centric approach has a particular influence on the studies in Australia given the country's historical and cultural linkage with the UK and its political alliance and social-cultural orientations towards the US over time (Kellehear, 2000). Lee (2015) notes that the design and management style of most cemeteries in Australia resemble those in the UK and inherently the British cultural conventions.² Many studies about death and EoL in Australia still tend to refer to those experiences of the US and UK – see, for example, Jalland (2006) and Kellehear, (2000) – as their point of departure. This is not to say Australia is slavishly following the traditions of the UK or US as there has been some notable divergence from these two traditions in Australia (Martin, 2004).

By developing from these research conventions, the present study will begin with locating the Australian case within the broader global context (UK, US and the OECD in general). This is beneficial because as a member of the Commonwealth, the Australian society has been closely integrated within the European/American cultural geographies. The cultural landscape in Australia continues to develop with the unique immigration patterns over time, which warrants a transnational and cross-cultural perspective in studying the changes and continuities of funeral rites and memorialisation traditions in Australia. Indeed, as to be discussed below, many of the rituals, concepts, wishes and practices of death and EoL in Australia are closely related to its immigration patterns over time. By learning the historical context about attitudes and perspectives about death and EoL in Australia, as well as the broader demographic shifts and changes, we can start to observe some key patterns and insights on changes and continuities of funeral rites and memorialisation in Australia and beyond, based on current literature.

² The contemporary garden style cemetery in Australia, for example, actually inherits the idea of private property and garden-style, standalone house, as embodied by the British garden cemeteries since the early to mid-1800s (Martin, 2004). The structure and presentation of the grave resemble a person's home. Thus, there is expressed ownership of the land title of the cemetery plot of the deceased's families (Francis, Kelaher and Neohytou, 2005).

Established knowledge

The place of death and gender

The funeral industry is a billion-dollar business in Australia. The IBISWorld reported that the industry had \$2 billion in revenue in the 2017/8 financial year and employs around 6,325 people with approximately 820 (registered) businesses. It is also a 'growing' business, with an average annual growth of 3.2% between 2014 and 2019 (IBISWorld, 2018).³ Increasingly, it is well known that the industry's revenue is 'strongly influenced by the number of deaths in Australia each year' (ibid), this traditional perception is unable to capture the new dynamics or paradox of the reality. While the industry is growing (in its revenue and market size) the death rates in Australia and across the OECD countries have dropped thanks to advanced medical technologies, and the expansion of the reach and access of the universal health care service (i.e. the Medicare system in Australia) (OECD, 2017).

The disjuncture here points to a changing dynamic of both the business operations of the industry and the social expectation and cultural dynamics of death and end-of-life (EoL) in Australia. While business revenue can be a complex and multi-dimensional figure, the IBISWorld Report (2018) does highlight a trend that might well explain the revenue growth during an era of 'fewer deaths': 'industry operators have been promoting more personalised services to increase revenue'. We can read this line in two ways: the term 'personalised(action)' seems to imbricate a cultural and commercial shift in the social perception and discourse about death and EoL; and the fact that the Report puts this trend in the section of 'Industry Threats & Opportunities' also partially indicates that it is an emerging trend rather than a fact or pattern. For the business, it carries uncertainties for the society it underpins, the potential transformation of ritual and rites, value and norms and hence, the structure(s) of the Australian society.

The first major shift of death and dying is the location and place where these experiences take place. As van der Laan and Moerman (2017, p. 13) argue, during the 20th Century 'the traditional activities associated with death and mourning shifted from family control to institutions.

³ <https://www.ibisworld.com.au/industry-trends/market-research-reports/personal-services/funeral-directors-crematoria-cemeteries.html> Please note this is not a full report as the full version requires payment (more than \$1,000 AUD); we need to be conscious about this type of market report as it is clearly coming from a profit maximisation and pro-business perspective. Nonetheless, it is worth and important to recognise some trends and figures provided by the industry, to cross-examine their claims and data with scholarly writings, as well as our own research findings.

According to a report prepared by the Grattan Institute (Swerissen and Duckett, 2014), as at 2014, only 14% of people died at home even though survey results show that 60-70% of Australians would prefer to die at home (p.4). The number of home deaths in Australia is also lower compared to some of our close allies such as New Zealand and the US – both indicate figures above 30%. At the same time, the hospital as the ‘death place’ has increased dramatically in Australia: 54% died in hospital, and 32% died in an aged care home (Swerissen and Duckett, 2014). Further, the older the person, the more likely s/he will die in a hospital or a medical facility: around 35% of women and 48% of men who are aged over 85 (Swerissen and Duckett, 2014). Hence, in the contemporary Australian society, families rarely have to organise funerals because the practices are now primarily taken care of by the industry (Howarth, 2000).

Evidence of a gender difference merits our attention because it depicts a particular historical trend of the gender role when it comes to death and dying. The above-noted figures clearly show that a woman is more likely to die outside of a medicalised space than a man. While no research can offer a definitive answer to explain the gender difference, some historical context is helpful. As Jalland (2006) points out, in the 19th and 20th centuries death and dying were mainly taken care of by women in the family (in the western context): from looking after the seriously ill to washing and preparing the deceased’s body for funeral and burial. However, the two World Wars changed the sector because a massive scale of death and dying needed to be managed and processed across western society. Death and dying were no longer confined to the domestic space and a more institutionalised system was required to process the death affairs (not to mention many soldiers died in a foreign land). The rituals and rites for burial and memorialisation needed to be conducted and delivered in a mass, collective scale rather than in an individual, household capacity (Jalland, 2006). Further, there was a disproportion between the survivors and the deceased: there was a lack of survivors’ capacity to cope in the face of such massive overload of death and sorrow (p. 14), a situation that has lasted for several decades during the post-WWII period.

The formation of the funeral industry and the medicalisation of death have radically changed the sites of death and EoL in Australia, hence, the newly expected gender roles in the services and practices provision. Men, instead of women, have become dominant in contemporary funeral and mourning experience. According to Pringle and Alley’s (1995) study, women comprised only 25% of the Australian funeral industry workforce in the early 1990s, and there were certain roles, such as handling the bodies, that women were excluded from entirely (Pringle and Collins, 1993).

This figure is a stark contrast with the pre-war tradition that women generally took up the duties of washing and preparing the bodies as mentioned. In other words, studies have identified the changing division of labour and gender roles in the EoL and death discourse as the space of death and memorialisation has increasingly shifted from the domestic, home space to the institutionalised public space.

The time of death and the Christian faith

Another crucial shift in the death and EoL discourse is the changing 'age of death'. Back in 1900, 25% of the population died before the age of 5, and only 5% died after the age of 85. By 2011, the figures were 'reversed' (Sweriseen and Duckett, 2014). There were many more 'premature' deaths due to infectious disease, which correlates with the advancement of medical technologies and knowledge (OECD, 2017). Indeed, a major contribution to the declining mortality rate since the late 20th Century is that most contagious diseases are now either curable (like influenza) or managed (like the AIDS/HIV) (Jalland, 2006). According to the OECD's *Health at a Glance* report (2017), life expectancy has on average increased across the world. The life expectancy is 80.6 years across OECD. At the same time, mortality rates for circulatory diseases have fallen significantly since 1990: 50% fewer deaths due to ischaemic heart disease, and 18% fewer deaths due to cancer. At least 95% of the OECD population has health coverage for a core set of services (OECD, 2017).

As 'old age' has now replaced 'young age' (infancy) as the most likely time of death, the frequency of death or people's chance of experiencing death directly (the loss of family members or close friends) remains low. According to Dickinson (2012), the Baby Boomer generation (across western societies) was the first generation to start experiencing death and dying at a later stage in life: 'This generation was the first in which a person could reach adulthood with only a 5% chance that an immediate family member would die' (p. 142). Jalland (2006, p. 4) also notes that most Australians today would not have to deal with death directly until the loss of their elderly parents (over the age of 75), while back in the colonial era, many young parents had to deal with the death of their newly-born child. Indeed, many Australians would have as a child had to deal with the death of their siblings, which is another trend that has become 'unusual' in modern, post-19th Century Australia (p. 5).

Interestingly, the decline of premature death was also related to the domination of the Christian religion in Australia during the late 1800s and early 1900s. As people tried to make sense of, and find comfort in, the high number of premature deaths, the Christian religion⁴ offered the needed spiritual belief, which developed itself into a model of acceptance and a language to express death and grief (Jalland, 2006). Praying with the Bible, singing hymns, for example, have become and consolidated as the 'model' (or ritual) of death, mourning and memorialisation. These practices and format, as Jalland (2006) argues, provided the much-needed comfort to parents who were dealing with dying children at the time. The significance of linking the Christian faith and funeral/memorialisation rituals in Australia during the 19th and most of the 20th centuries is related to the extent that Australia was a 'Christian society'. This was not only because the influx of immigration from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, but also because many of those who came from Great Britain already doubted Christianity. Nonetheless, many people retain a residual belief in Christianity, which affects their attitude toward death (Jalland, 2006).

Australia is not alone when it comes to the changing relations between social attitude towards death (and the associated rituals) and the Christian faith. Writing against the American context, Sloane (2018, p. 12) has identified five major shifts in the changing cultural landscape of death and memorialisation in America. First and foremost, is the changing trend in religious faith and secularisation.⁵ The same can be said about Australia. According to the latest Census conducted in 2016 (ABS, 2017), more than 29.6% of Australian residents self-identify as 'no religion',⁶ that is 7% more than those who identified themselves as 'Catholic' (22.6%). This is the first time in the country's history that 'No religion' attracted the highest proportion of respondents. To put the above figures into context, there were only 22.6% of Australian residents identifying as 'no religion' in the previous Census (2011). While there were still 51% of people identifying themselves with 'Christian faith', the figure is significantly smaller compared to the early 1990s (74%) (Chang and AAP, 2017).

⁴ Mainly due to the fact that European settlers dominated Australia's history of the colonisation and the early part of Federation.

⁵ The other four being: Changing ideas of dying, the rise of an environmental sensibility, popular recognition of do-it-yourself (DIY), and the emergence of digital media.

⁶ This figure is significantly higher than the American figure – 18% by 2016 (Sloane, 2018).

Body disposal and the expression of self

One of the significant implications of the changing religious landscape in Australia is perhaps the shifting preference from ground burial to cremation. Christianity in general, with Catholicism in particular, has emphasis on the importance of full-body burial (van der Laan and Moerman, 2017). In other words, full-body burial as the dominant form of body disposal and hence, the mode of memorialisation it underpins⁷ has been supported and reinforced by the expansion of Catholicism and Christianity in general during the following periods: (1) the early European settlements and (2) the influx of European migrants after the two World Wars. Since the substantial decline in Christian church attendance and rise of other religious practices (partly due to migration from Asia and the increased secularisation of the Australian society (see Wilson and Chiveralls, 2013), Australia is also witnessing a growth in cremation as the preferred method of body disposal in Australia (van der Laan and Moerman, 2017). There was also a push in favour of cremation by the Australian government as it was deemed to be hygienic – this was set against the context that burial ground was mistakenly associated with the infectious disease during the 19th Century (Nicol, 2000). The change towards cremation, however, was socially controversial at the time. As Nicol (2000) points out, early supporters of cremation were heavily influenced by utilitarianism and secularism, while its opponents were generally religious fundamentalist. An important insight from this historical account is that the preference of body disposal has been, historically, associated with one's ideology and belief; or, as Tom Lee (2015) suggests, it is about one's sense of selfhood and identity.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), out of the 159,000 deaths in Australia in 2016, 70% of those in the urban areas opted for cremation, and 56% in non-urban areas opted for cremations (Palin, 2017). Cremation is often deemed a modern way of body disposal that carries a sense of self-choice and individuality. As van der Laan and Moerman (2017, p. 12) explain, 'cremated remains (ashes or cremains) provide opportunities for innovative products such as the incorporation of the ashes into keepsakes (teddy bears, vinyl records, pencils etc.), jewellery, fireworks and even tattoo ink'.

More importantly, the critical issue of choice is a feeling that resonates particularly strong among the Baby Boomer generations, both in Australia and other western, OECD countries (Swerissen and

⁷ Such as visiting the gravesite and the centrality of cemetery as part of the urban planning and cultural imagination in Australian cities. Jalland (2006) argues that traditionally, visiting a grave not only serves the purpose of remembrance and meditation but it is a devotional ritual of the Christian faith. In other words, visiting a grave is part of the practice of being a Christian rather than an act that is exclusive for grieving, memorialisation and remembrance.

Duckett, 2014). In the case of the UK, for example, Smith's research (2000) shows the foremost criteria of a 'good death' is that if one were able to retain control of what happens, which includes the type of funeral service, form of body disposal, time of death, minimisation of pain and other symptoms, level of involvement of medical treatments, and the fact that all these choices are being respected. The discourse of a 'good death' seems to align with Sloanne's (2018) observation of the rise of a DIY culture in America across all aspects of one's life and death. It appears that the earlier statement made by the funeral and EoL industry in Australia regarding 'service personalisation' as both the major challenge and opportunity the industry faces in the coming years, is located within some broader global trends. The social sentiments and preference of individual choice can be read as the contemporary society's symbolic departure from the structural format of death and memorialisation (in Australia at least).

A further trend and complication with people's wishes are that the intertwining senses of individual choice and modernity of non-burial mode of body disposal are linked with, or framed within, an environmentalist/conservationist discourse (Olson, 2016; IBISWorld, 2016; Sloanne, 2018). Lee (2015) for example, documents the various modes of body disposal under the banner of 'natural burial' – the burial practices that pay heed to conservation imperatives, including the use of biodegradable materials, bush regeneration and the maintenance of biodiversity' (2015, p. 100). A quick Google news search can again illustrate the point in Australia. Ideas such as using hi-tech supersonic waves to shatter the cadaver into powders (Funnell, 2018), building underwater graveyard at a popular Gold Coast dive spot (Baumgartel, 2018), or, merely recycling the grave plots (Butler, 2018), are among some of the many ideas about burial in a more natural and environmentally friendly way in Australia and across the western society. As a concept, natural burial underpins the relationship between humans and nature and the obligation of the former to the latter (Larkins, 2007). Statistically, there seems to be some correlation between the preference of natural/alternative mode of burial and the rising concern of environmental issues in Australia. According to a report commissioned by the World Wide Foundation (WWF, 2018), four out of five Australians say 'we should act now' on environmental problems: 53% of Australians say they have already switched to environmentally friendly products, 86% say they are serious about recycling, and more than 86% of Australians say that climate change is happening and caused by human activities (WWF, 2018).

While our study here is not about Australians' attitudes towards environment, we are, however, interested in the public discourse of 'taking action' on environmental issues. By cross-examining these findings with our research data, it seems that choosing a more environmentally friendly mode of body

disposal is part of the 'taking action' discourse in Australia; it seems like an expression of a greener and environmentally savvy self in the contemporary Australian society.

Knowledge Gaps

The perceived role of the cemetery in Australia

The social acceptance of cremation also symbolises a shift of the cultural perception about the cemetery in Australia, as well as in many western developed societies (Jalland, 2006). Indeed, the cemetery of today has emerged over the past two hundred years. Modern cemeteries, at least those in the west, first appeared during the 1820-40s, coinciding with the end of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. The contemporary garden style cemetery in Australia for example, actually inherits the idea of private property and garden-style, standalone house, as embodied by the British garden cemeteries since the early to mid-1800s (Martin, 2004). The metaphorical expression of home as the place of the gravesite, expresses the ownership of the land title of the cemetery plot of the deceased's families (Francis, Kellaher and Neohytou, 2005). Although this is not exclusive to the Europeans since Asian cultures such as the Chinese, also have a long tradition of claiming the land ownership of the grave plots. However, it is the very specific British garden aesthetic that imbricates the capitalistic mode of production and consumption – a direct result from the industrialisation and the rise of capitalistic economy in the British society and its colonies around the world (Francis, Kellaher and Neophytou, 2005).

The assumed private ownership of the burial plot has led the modern cemetery to become an increasingly wealth-determined, consumption-driven, and image conscious modern society (Sloane, 2018). Such a capitalistic centric symbolism of cemetery and gravesite has expanded across the world and to other EoL-related sectors (Beard and Burger, 2017; Han, 2016a, 2019). Coincidentally or not, the rise of the contemporary cemetery in the US also took place around the same time, which emerged through the end of the Civil War (1861-1865) when more than 600,000 soldiers (and an equivalent number if not greater amount of war horses) lost their lives in merely four years. From that point onwards, organising the disposal of dead bodies has become part of political governance for both the logistic and symbolic reasons (Sloane, 2018).

As documented in the book *Death and the American Civil War* (Faust, 2009), prior to the war American cemeteries were privately owned and managed; because of the war, the Congress passed a bill to empower the president to purchase grounds for a national cemetery to honour soldiers who sacrificed for their country. Death and mourning have since become public and organised in a collective format

in America. A new institution, the institution of the death and mourning, was created in America and continues to shape individuals' (expected) rites, ritual and emotional expressions (Sloane, 2018).

The institutional interests intersect with individuals' wishes, which sustain the constant reproduction of death-space and the reimagination of EoL experience. Raymond Firth (2005) provides some extensive accounts of the different terminologies used in English to describe what he calls the 'earthen resting place of a dead human body' (xvii): graveyard, cemetery, mausoleum and necropolis. Without repeating Firth's descriptions we generate the following table:

Terms	Definition
Graveyard	The enclosure containing graves
Cemetery	This term does not refer to death at all. It is an equivalent to the classical Greek word meaning 'a dormitory'. The English term implies 'a resting place or a sleeping place.
Necropolis	The dead as buried in or near a city, or perhaps as constituting a city in themselves.
Mausoleum	A stately burial structure, reminiscent of the classical, perhaps legendary, tomb of the kings.
Barrow and tumulus	Ancient sepulchral monuments that relate to the disposal of the dead.

The definition of the cemetery has changed from a space that does not carry the idea of death and dying to the contemporary reference as 'a place for collective burials set apart from the ordinary living and working places of the folk' (Firth, 2005, p. xvii). The significance of the changing meaning is twofold: the (contemporary western) cemetery is a model to organise and manage death collectively, and it is deliberately designed and framed to contrast with the living.

As a result, authors in the field generally conceive that in *western, modern* society at least, death is marginalised and separated from routine life (Sloane, 2018).

We emphasise the idea of 'modernity' here on recognising that the relation between cemetery (and death) and the living society is not always mutually exclusive. This is particularly the case in Australia.

As Tom Lee (2015) points out, cemeteries have a long history of multi-functionality. This is evident through Martin's (2004) study of a cemetery in Melbourne, Australia where the Victorian traditions of cemeteries function as garden and leisure space rather than mere death or commercialisation spaces. Likewise, Lee (2015) believes the cemetery and burial ground might offer the same educational function that the church once did by connecting the general public with the local history and past. In other words, while fewer Australians require a place in the cemetery for themselves or their ancestors, the cemetery remains as a crucial cultural and social landmark for them to develop and negotiate their sense of self and belonging. From humanistic knowledge to scientific research, Barret and Barrett (2001) see the cemeteries as 'repositories' that support and protect the threatened ecologies. Cemetery and memorial spaces are of course the repositories of the human histories and embody people's family genealogy (Layder, 1998). As Shroer and Hine (2017, p. 1) write: 'a cemetery can hold a vast amount of knowledge about a family, genealogy, changing religious and social beliefs'; hence, a study of cemeteries makes critical inquiries of the relationships between individuals and society' (Shroer and Hine, 2017).

Indeed, as Nicol (2000) points out, a continuous debate surrounding the cemetery use in Australia is the issue of reusing graves for other urban development purposes,⁸ such as constructing new buildings on top of graves of the colonial era. This then relates to a legal (as well as social philosophical) issue, for example, if a grave is indeed on a 'lease' or having its perpetual 'land title' (Nicol, 2000). The debate demonstrates the changing perception and attitude towards the role of the cemetery in the Australian society. This is certainly an emerging trend that still requires more research (which the present one can make a modest contribution to) there has been media interest in the conversation. The ABC, for example, has published a story that the cemetery sector in Australia has recognised the need for Australian cemeteries to reengage with the public (Agius, 2018) by broadening the cultural meaning of the cemetery space – as a response to people's changing perception of cemetery as *the* (only) resting place in life.

This is reflected through a recent community survey report produced by the Greater Melbourne Cemetery Trusts (GMCT, 2018) which shows that most of their correspondents associate the cemetery with the idea of 'history', 'self-reflection', 'peaceful(ness)'; by contrast, ideas such as 'grieving',

⁸ Such a proposal is often supported by utilitarianists (see Jalland, 2006, p. 31)

‘sadness’, and ‘resting place’ are now secondary to people’s mind when they think of cemeteries in Melbourne.

Further, for Melbournians, a good cemetery is one that is green with beautiful gardens and flora, as well ‘open’ to the public with ‘easy access’ (such as transportation and clear directory). Interestingly, the GMCT (2018) study reports that correspondents thought that it was appropriate for a cemetery to host music events (40%), art installation (more than 50%), passive recreations (over 45%) and workshops (over 45%). We investigate if some of these attitudes toward the cemetery are affirmed in the current study. We need to further explore these new social preferences, perceptions and attitudes towards cemeteries in a contemporary Australian context, as well as how the changing ideas of cemeteries are situated within some of the broader shifts in the death and EoL discourse.

A multicultural society

Compared to other aspects of death and EoL, the development of a culturally diverse society has yet to receive a thorough examination, despite a great deal of attention. While industry reports (IBISWorld, 2017; Service Skills Australia, 2015) generally recognise that the funeral and EoL support sectors need to adjust to, and cater for, a multicultural Australia – few, including academics⁹ and policy researchers, however, have gone into details about the core aspects and potential issues in shaping the Australian death landscape. This is reflected through the discussions and analysis of much of the current research, which mainly considers ‘a nation’ as a homogenous cultural system rather than one that is constituted by multiple and diverse ranges of cultural values and beliefs. This is changing with a surge of research that takes the perspective of transnational migration, and we can develop some critical insights about Australia by learning from those from another national context.

Alistair Hunter’s (2016) study, for example, reveals the collision and intersections between the institutionalised and the personalised, embodying the issue of power. By drawing on the media’s coverage of the legal disputes around open-air Hindu funeral pyres in Britain and planning permissions for a Muslim cemetery in Scotland, Hunter reveals that deathscapes are paradigmatic sites through which to study the power dynamics in geographies of death and mourning and mainly contested place-making. A further point emerging from Hunter’s study is that there seems to be a clear discrepancy between the so-called western social values of death and those communities of non-western heritage:

⁹ A notable exception is Jalland’s book (2006), which contains a section (pp. 321-327) that documents the diverse ritual practice and burial preference of the Greek and Italian migrants in the post-war Australia.

while we have been talking about the trend of moving away from ground burial, it is clear that not every community is part of this development. In Australia, both the industry and academic studies (including the present one) indicate the continuing significance of ground burial and cemetery for communities such as the Jewish and Muslim. This is why Hunter sees that in a society, the spaces of death are also the spaces of power contestation and deliberation.

Further, using a transnational framework to understand the contemporary ritual practices in a local context provides a lens to learn about the needs and wishes of memorialisation and mourning across different communities. As Mazzucato, Kabki and Smith (2016) argue, the deathscape is a transnational concept that involves issues such as mobility, equality and multiculturalism: 'funerals are frequently multi-sited events in which migrants overseas play essential roles in the organisation, financing, and carrying out of ceremonies' (p. 1048). By focusing on the practice of funeral spending and remittance of a funeral held in the Asanti Region of Ghana, Mazzucato, Kabki and Smith (2016) show the involvements, participation and contributions made by family and community members at a transnational scale: not only more than 30% of the 1,000 funeral attendees came from surrounding regions and even overseas (as far as from the Netherlands), the financial cost and remittance received by the funeral came from a transnational scale that was widely dispersed throughout different economic sectors.

As popularity spreads and spatial mobility increases thanks to the ever-advancing transportation and communication technologies, the funeral rites, memorial practices and the very economic and financial logistics of the process, are increasingly being arranged on a transnational scale. Hence, a traditional Ghana funeral, for example, can no longer follow its traditional temporality – people used to just turn up to a local funeral, and the organisation of a funeral and memorial service never requires such extensive temporal and spatial consideration – more time is needed to organise a funeral because the experience now spans across multiple and different spatial scales (Mazzucato, Kabki and Smith, 2016). Of course, digital media adds a further dimension to the whole death and memorialisation landscape here.

Adam's work (2015) on Indonesian migrant workers' utilisation of Facebook to conduct ancestor memorialisation even being physically dispositioned, shows two key trends: (1) The geography of death and memorialisation is expanding to the realm of the digital and virtual world; (2) the temporality of death and dying, memorialisation and mourning, are also being adjusted in response to the new, translocal and transnational deathscape.

There is another form of producing transnational deathscape: instead of 'going back' to attend a family or community member's funeral, migrants are increasingly comfortable to 'stay back' in their newly settled land. A telling example is Oliver's (2004) study of the British expatriates in Spain where some British perceive Spain as their new home hence, prefer to die and to have their remains to be left (burial or scattering ashes) in Spain; while others still view Spain as a 'holiday making' place and would hence, prefer to return to the UK. Likewise, in Han, Forbes-Mewett and Wang (2018) relating to Chinese migrants' wishes and preferences of funeral and burial in Australia, it is clear that majority of the study's participants opted to 'stay in Australia' because that is where their children and grandchildren live. While the two studies show a similar form of acculturation and negotiation of funeral rites and memorialisation in a transnational scale, they also highlight the central issue of 'belonging'. The site of death and the geography of memorialisation are always linked to one's perception of self and sense of belonging. For the present study, a crucial aspect is how a migrant community's sense of belonging shapes its members' perception about dying in Australia. A further point from here is then how a migrant's sense of belonging has been negotiated across their own culture and Australia's social expectations.

Building on past studies, the present study investigates the following research questions:

1. How do contemporary Australians perceive the cemetery, in terms of the role of the cemetery? What makes a desirable cemetery in the contemporary Australian society?
2. What is the level of information available to the public in terms of the funeral? What is the significance of religion in the funeral?
3. Why do Australians choose full-body burial and others choose cremation? What kinds of memorialisation do Australians prefer? To what extent do Australians pre-purchase the gravesite or memorialisation site?
4. What is the extent to which Australians are prepared to pre-plan a funeral?
5. What are the key beliefs and values that affect Australians' practice/perception of death, cemetery, and memorialisation?

3. Research methods

Quantitative survey

Study participants (n=380) were recruited through an online advertisement and also by inviting those 'registered' in the database collected and maintained by the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust.

Interviews with 82 research participants

When undertaking the online quantitative survey, participants were invited to contact the researchers if interested in a one-on-one semi-structured interview.

- 82 interviews were conducted between 1 July to 31 October 2018
- 50 participants completed the online survey prior to the interviews.
- Face-to-face (42) and phone interviews (40)
- Interview schedules were semi-structured and conducted with 'conversational' style
- Most participants lived in the greater Melbourne areas, two lived in regional NSW and two in Tasmania
- Diverse social, cultural and religious/spiritual backgrounds
- All conducted in English
- All participations were voluntary

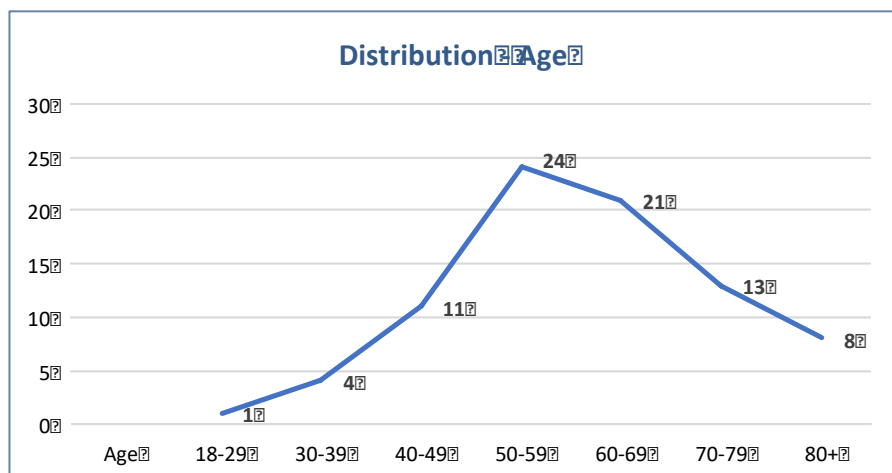
Categories – not mutually exclusive

- Baby boomers (BB) – born between 1946-1964 inclusive
- People with Christian faith
- Individuals who come from culturally and linguistically/ethnically diverse background (CALD i.e. migrants)
- Some participants belong to more than one of the three categories.

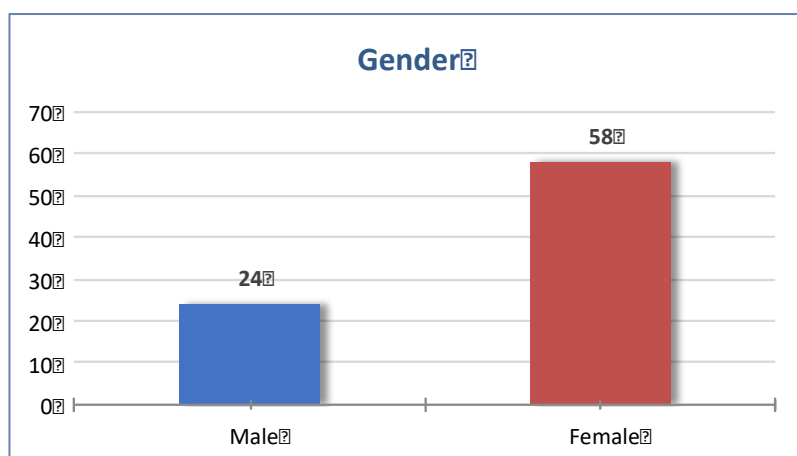
Age & gender

- BBs dominated the data.
- 50s seems to be an important 'phase of life' when EoL starting to become 'real'.
- Women have played a crucial role in facilitating end-of-life-related subjects across many communities (consistent with our earlier study in 2016/17):
 - The Muslim community is an obvious exception based on our data.
 - Traditionally (western culture), women take responsibilities of the birth and death of a family.

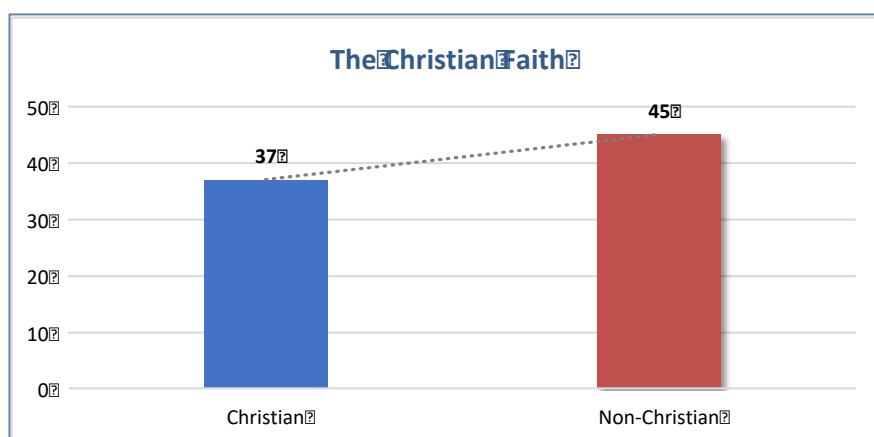
Distribution of age



Distribution of gender

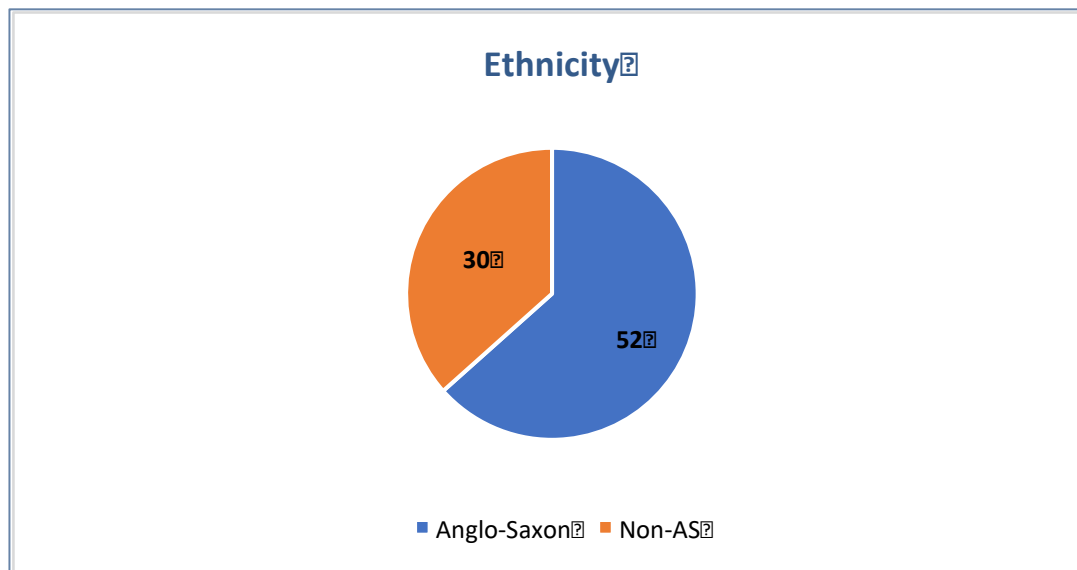


Distribution of Christians and non-Christians



The Christian faith is a complex and diverse construct. Twenty-eight self-identified as 'not religious', but eight of them came from a Christian family/background. 'The church is changing (modernising)' – a frequently expressed idea – that might correlate with the lack of obvious distinctions within the broad Christian community.

Distribution of Ethnicity: Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon



Anglo-Saxons were the dominant group who came forward to participate in the research. Twenty-two of the 28 non-religious participants were Anglo-Saxon. Our data tends to over-present a well-educated, middle class discourse, which might correlate with the Anglo-Saxon-dominated ethnic representation (the mainstream). This is also related to the nature of the goals of the research project.

Funeral Rites and Memorialisation in Contemporary Australia – Questionnaire

This research project is investigating the end-of-life decision-making and funerary preferences of Melbourne’s diverse community. Given a lack of knowledge in this area, the findings will be used to better inform support arrangements, and service provision. This questionnaire will take approximately 7 minutes to complete. While you may not have considered some of these issues in depth, please tick the most appropriate responses to the best of your knowledge.

- Q.1 What is your gender?** Male ☐
Female ☐
- Q.2 What is the postcode where you live?**
.....
- Q.3 What country were you born in?**
.....
- Q.4 What is your ethnic background (i.e. Pacific Islander, Anglo Australian, Chinese etc.)?**
.....
- Q.5 Do you identify or belong to a religious or spiritual group? If yes, what is the name?**
.....
- Q.6 How old are you?** 18 to 21 ☐
22 to 34 ☐
35 to 44 ☐
45 to 54 ☐
55 to 64 ☐
65 to 74 ☐
75 and over ☐
- Q.7 Do you ever visit cemeteries?** Yes ☐
No ☐
- Q.8 If yes, how often?** Once a month or more ☐
Once a year or more ☐
Every 5 years ☐
Every 10 years or longer ☐
- Q.9 If no, why haven’t you visited a cemetery?** I have no need to ☐
I feel uncomfortable in cemeteries..... ☐
I do not have any family/loved ones members at a cemetery..... ☐

- Q.10 Have you discussed your funeral plans with your family or loved ones?**
- Other (please specify) ☐
- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐
- Q.11 Have you ever spoken about your preferences for burial or cremation with your family or loved ones?**
- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- Q.12 Have you pre-purchased a grave, cremation or memorial at a cemetery?**
- Yes ☐
- No ☐
- Q.13 If yes, what prompted your decision to purchase a grave or cremation memorial at a cemetery?**
- Someone close to me passed away ☐
- To ensure I have a place close to other deceased family or loved ones ☐
- I like to be organised and prepared ☐
- Peace of mind for myself and family ☐
- Cultural and religious reasons ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐
- Q.14 Which of the following options would you prefer?**
- Conventional burial ☐
- Natural burial (environmentally friendly coffin and burial place) ☐
- Mausoleum/crypt ☐
- Cremation – ashes kept within a cemetery ☐
- Cremation – ashes kept or scattered outside a cemetery ☐
- I have not considered ☐
- My family/spouse can decide ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐
- Q.15 Which of the following places would you prefer the cremated remains to be kept/scattered?**
- At home with you ☐
- In a part/natural place ☐
- In the ocean or beach ☐
- Near to where I live ☐
- A place of religious or cultural significance ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

Q.16 What is the main reason for this choice?

- Family/cultural tradition.....☐
- Religious reasons.....☐
- It's an inexpensive option.....☐
- To be close to where I live☐
- To be placed somewhere meaningful to me☐
- To be placed somewhere meaningful to my family.....☐
- Other (please specify)☐

Q.17 If someone close to you passed away, who would you or your family most likely contact first for funeral planning?

- A cemetery☐
- Religious leader or spiritual group☐
- A friend☐
- A funeral Director☐
- I have not considered/I am not sure☐
- Other (please specify)☐

Q.18 To the following statements below, please indicate if you agree or disagree

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a.	I know what is involved in arranging a funeral	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	I know how to get independent advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.	I feel the advice I would get from a privately-owned funeral director is independent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	Before deciding what my wishes are, I will conduct research online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.	Cemeteries are places for the living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f.	Cemeteries are more than just places to cremate and bury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.	I feel it's important to have a permanent place where my remains are placed for future generations to visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h.	I feel confident to discuss my end-of-life choices with my loved ones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i.	I feel comfortable talking to my loved ones (parents, grandparents, partner, etc.) about planning ahead for final wishes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j.	I know what I want and my family is fully aware	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q.19 If you would be comfortable to discuss your answer in more detail, please provide your contact details?

Name _____

Contact phone number _____

Email address _____

End Questionnaire – Thank you

Interview Questions for 2018 Rites

Awareness

1. What's been your experience with cemeteries?
 - a. Have you visited one before? How often?
2. Have you visited a cemetery for reasons other than a funeral?
 - a. Would you?
3. How do you feel about cemeteries generally?
 - a. What is your view about cemeteries?

Access to information

Position: If you were planning a loved one's funeral ...

4. Have you had to plan someone's funeral before?
5. Did (do) you know what your options were (are)?
 - a. Where did you go to get information to plan?
 - b. What channels did you trust to get the information?
 - c. What channels **don't** you trust to get information from?

Preferences

6. Have you thought about your final wishes?
 - a. What have your family or others done? Would you do the same or different?
 - b. Do you think you will do things differently to what your parents will do?
7. What do you feel is the most important aspect in planning your final rites?
 - a. Why is this important to you?
8. What would you like as your final resting place?
9. Is your preference cremation or burial?

Decision making

Position: If not planned ...

10. Do you think planning your end-of-life wishes is important?
 - a. What is stopping you from planning? Why haven't you?
 - b. Do you have in mind when you would like to start planning yours?

Position: If planned ...

11. What aspects of funeral have you planned?
 - a. What have you prompted you to plan?

Values

12. What key values in your life would you like reflected in your final rites?
 - a. (if struggling, probe): Were these key values evident at times or major life events (for instance, a wedding, birth of a child etc.)?



Health
and Human
Services



FUNERAL RITES AND MEMORIALISATION IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA: CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES



**Have you ever thought about funeral
rites and memorialisation?**

Monash University with the Victorian Government's Cemetery Sector Governance Support and the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust are seeking participants.

We invite participants in Melbourne including:

- 'Baby Boomers' (born between 1946-1965)
- Christians
- Other diverse communities.



**We are interested to hear your perceptions, experiences
and plans regarding end-of-life decisions and funerary practices.**

We would like to hear from people prepared to complete a **questionnaire and/or participate in an interview**. Questionnaires will take approx. 5 min and can be done online: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZN62VHJ>. Interviews will take approx. 45-60 min and will be done face-to-face at your convenience. If you are interested, or have any questions, please contact - Wilfred at Wilfred.Wang@monash.edu or 0412-982-450. Or Helen at Helen.ForbesMewett@monash.edu.



*Investigators: Assoc. Prof. Gil-Soo Han & Dr Helen Forbes-Mewett
Project Officer: Dr Wilfred Wang*

4. Quantitative Analysis

Introduction

The analysis consisted of 380 survey respondents. The channels for the survey were mostly online, however some were made available through seniors' groups and associations. We engaged stakeholders to promote the research through channels identified and selected by Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT). Due to the inherent biases in these groups (age, culture or religion) we sought to engage paid responses to ensure the demographic mix was representative of the broader Victorian public.

We asked a range of questions (from 15 to 17 questions), with different responses triggering subsequent questions. This approach was to uncover the motivation behind certain choices and qualify their meaning.

The questions are grouped into these main topic areas:

1.1 Demographic information – age, sex, gender, cultural identity, country of birth and religion

1.2 Cemetery visitation frequency and perceptions

1.3 Funeral Planning:

- Likelihood to plan and motivations
- Channels for arranging a funeral

1.4 Disposal, Memorialisation preferences and motivations for choice

1.5 Summary analysis

The questions and topic areas were selected due to their sensitivity to the subject, and considerate of cultural taboos around death. Respondents could opt out of any question if they felt uncomfortable answering the topic.

Methodology

We have used a 'balanced' method for the questions to understand both consumer intentions and behaviours. For that matter the readers will observe that some questions are seeking to understand a consumer's intentions, and some questions ask for past behaviours. This approach gives a robustness to the research and helps make more accurate predictions to future behaviours (please refer to the study instruments provided earlier).

1.1 Demographics

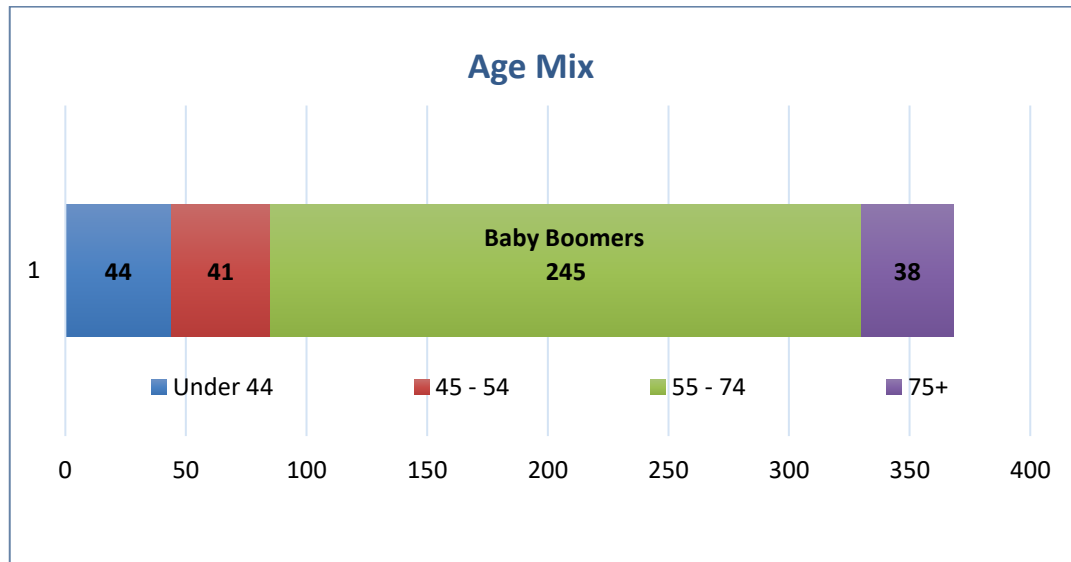
To understand the range of survey responses and the weight of the analysis to each particular category we need to understand the demographic mix of the respondents.

Gender mix: 63% Female and 38% Male

Noting a higher response rate for women than men, this aligns with other research findings in this topic, women are generally more engaged and receptive to the conversation.

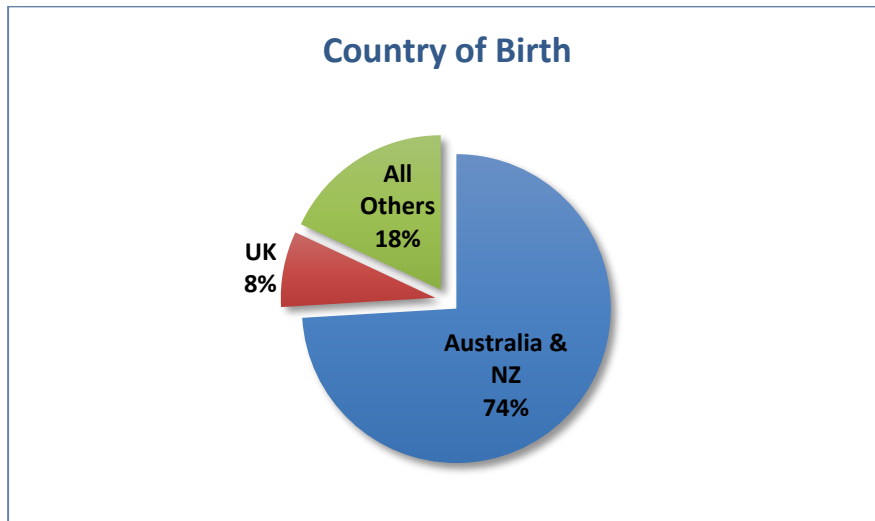
Age mix of survey respondents

We intentionally sought out respondents over the age of 54. However, due to the openness of the survey and channels we pursued, we have a spread of respondents from under 44 to over 75, with 67% making up the Baby Boomer cohort and 77% of total responses over 54. Where stated in this report, if we have outlined Baby Boomers, we have excluded all other responses from other age groups.



Country of birth: 74% Australian and NZ, 8% from United Kingdom and 18% from all other countries.

The channels of communication may have led to some bias due to the survey being available in English only, therefore excluding some groups.

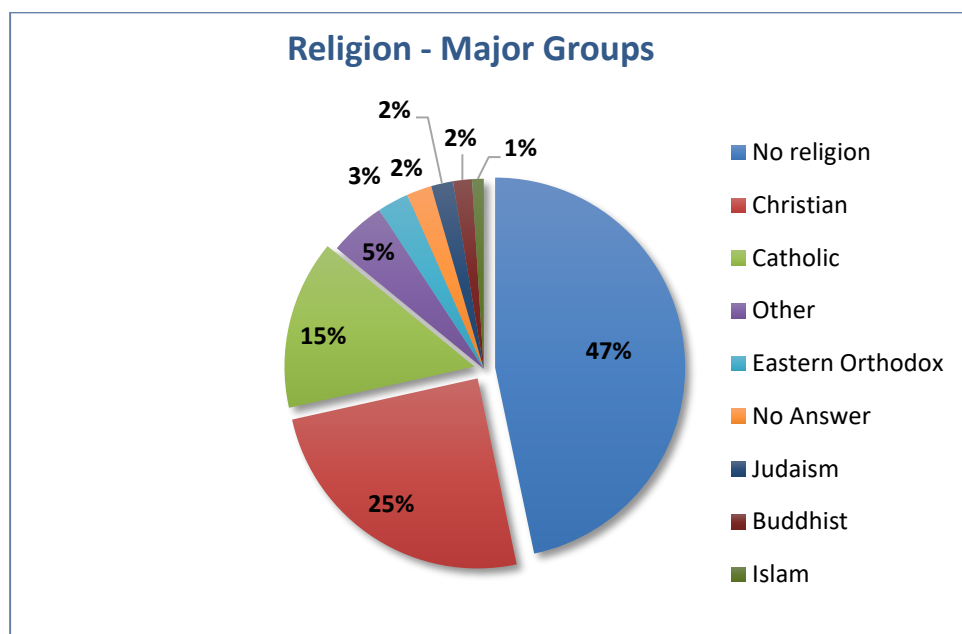


Religion – major groups

Religion is an important demographic point to capture, as historically the more traditional and religious a community group is, the more predictable their memorial preferences are, with a greater propensity to be memorialised (see memorialisation preferences later in this report.)

The survey does not capture how active the individual is in practicing their religion, however if self-identified, it would be fair to assume their religion plays a role in the funeral preferences and therefore relevant.

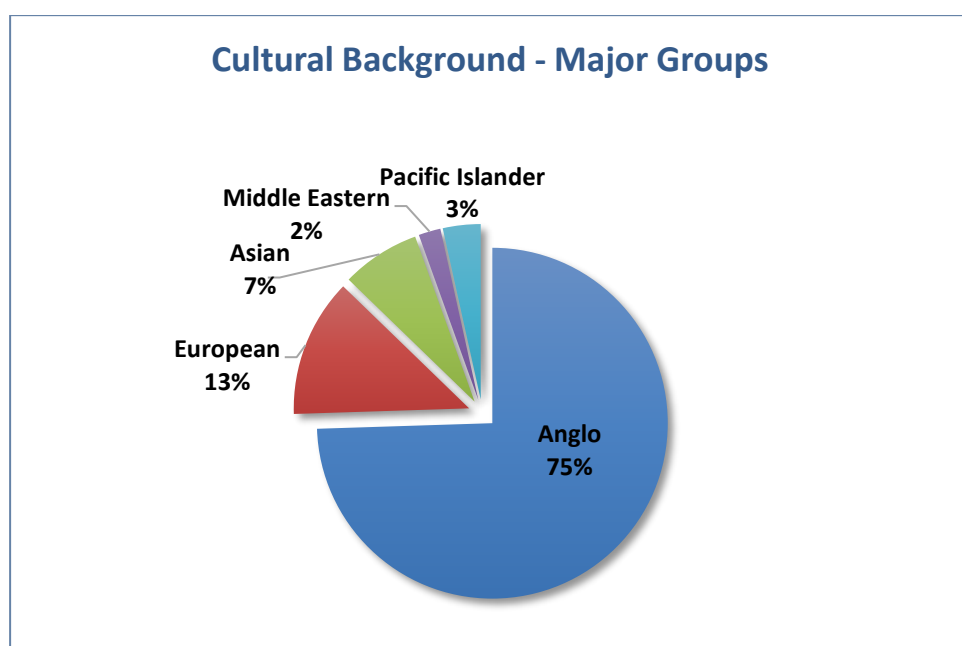
Key insights found were that 54% of Australian-born respondents did not identify as religious, whereas of those who were not born in Australia, 67% identified with some form of religion. This finding aligns with Victorian Census data, whereas, people born overseas are generally more religious.



Cultural background

Anglo Australian 75%; European 13%; Asian 7%; Middle Eastern 2%; and Pacific Islander 3%.

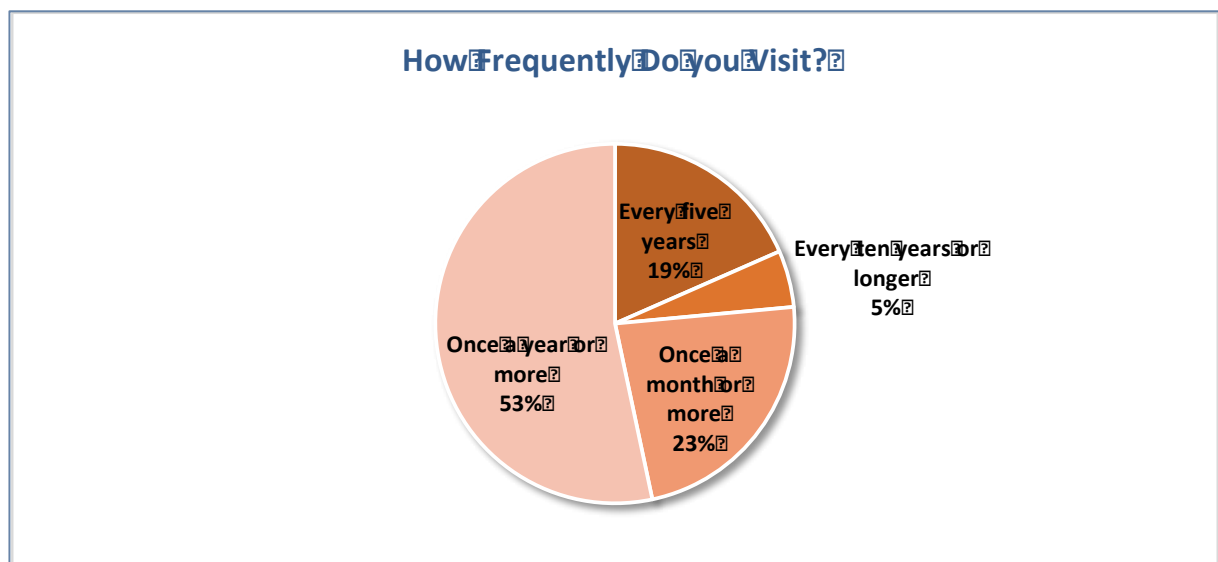
As expected, due to the channels the survey made available we had a large proportion of Anglo Australian respondents. Also noting 3% of respondents identified as Pacific Islander, this was attributed to early scope of this research which specifically included Pacific Islander community, however due to community feedback to the sensitivity of some sections of the community to this topic, we shifted the focus of the research away from this group.



1.2 Perceptions and Visitation to Cemeteries

Of the 369 respondents, 70% said they visited cemeteries and 30% said they did not. Those who did not indicated that it was because they did not have a loved one or family member interred in the cemetery.

Key insights: 47% of Australian-born respondents indicated they did not visit cemeteries, whereas 26% of overseas born respondents did not. The frequency of visitation for those who attended was fairly regular, with 73% indicating they visit more than once a year.



Perceptions

For those who did not visit cemeteries, we sought to understand their motivations as well; this gave us an important insight into their perception of the cemetery.

We found that only 12 (9%) of the respondents who did not visit a cemetery indicated that it was because they felt 'Uncomfortable in Cemeteries', with almost all (11 of 12) being Anglo-Australian.

Of those who did not visit cemeteries, 78% indicated it was due to either 'No need (18%)' or 'Don't have any family or loved ones interred' (60%). Therefore, the main motivations for all visitation to cemeteries is to attend the memorials of family or loved ones.

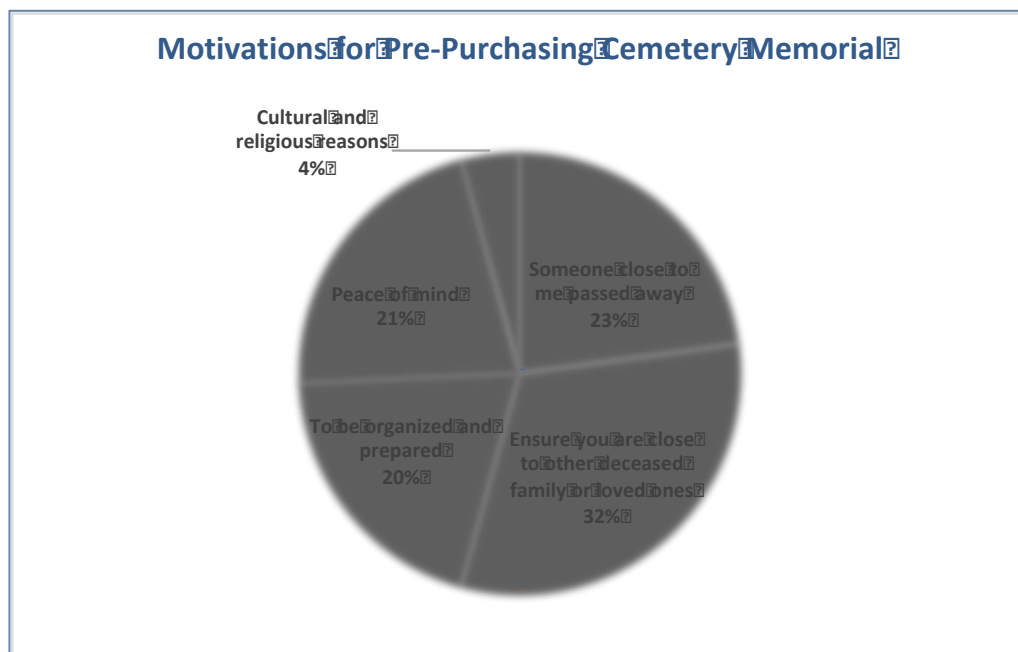
1.3 Funeral Planning

Of those surveyed, 64% said they had discussed their funeral plans (generally) and 26% had not discussed their plans with their family, while 11% had already paid for a memorial in a cemetery.

The likelihood to discuss plans was not dependant on the age of the person. We found that the youngest cohort (under 45 years old) – over half (55%) – had discussed their broad preferences, which was not statically different from the over 55s, of whom 60% said they had discussed their plans.

Of those who had pre-purchased a cemetery location (11% of all responses), we wanted to understand what the main driver was for them to purchase (noting respondents could select multiple answers). Given several options to choose from, the main reasons to drive the purchase were mostly related to the ‘passing away of a loved one’ or ensuring a ‘location is secured near a loved one’. This feedback encompassed more than 55% of the total responses.

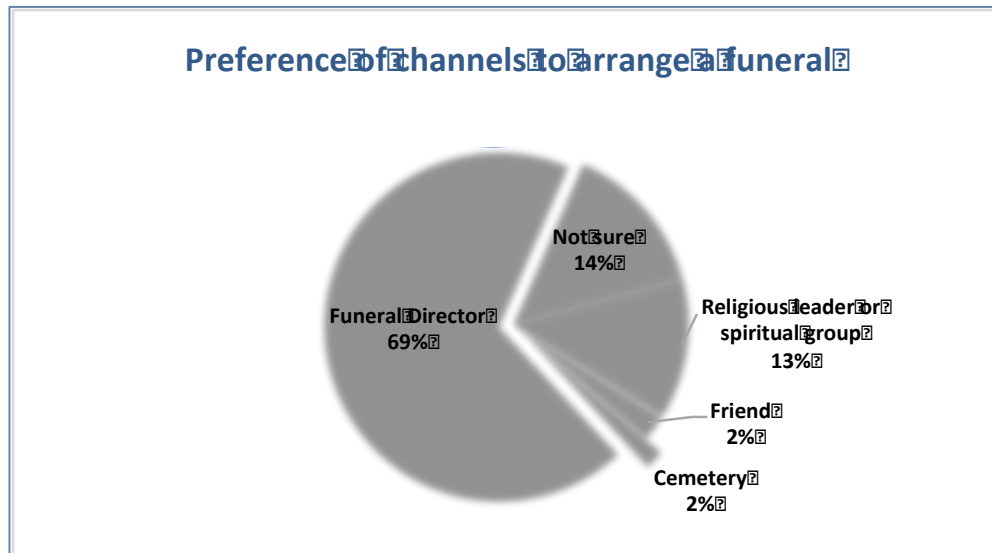
Key insight: The main factor for buying in a cemetery is to be close to their loved ones or family; the family nexus is the key driver for pre-purchasing.



Channels for arranging a funeral

When asked, *Who have you (or would you) speak to first to help arrange a funeral*, most respondents seemingly relied heavily on funeral directors (69%), more importantly 14% did not know who they could turn to, and currently only 2% would approach a cemetery.

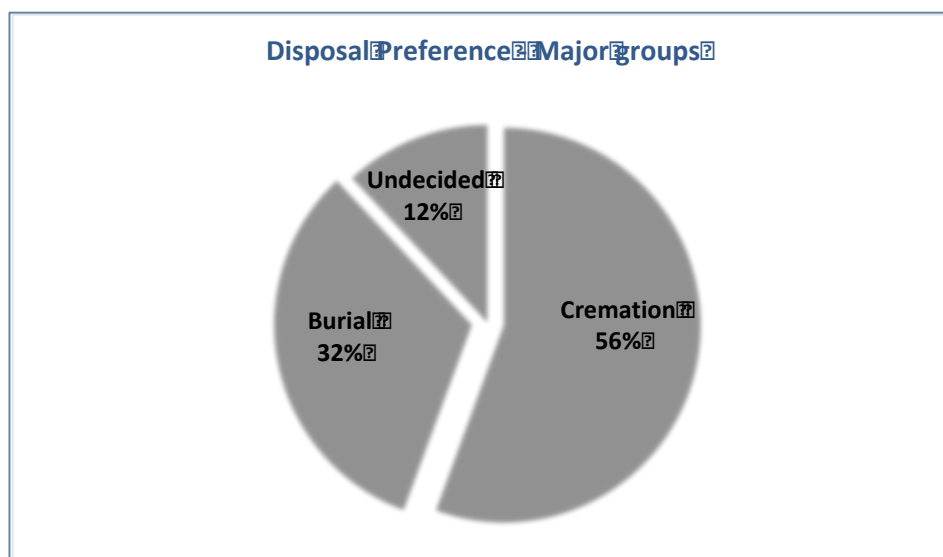
Key insight: As 14% of respondents were undecided, open information channels (internet, websites, government agencies) play an important role in informing these people through independent channels with unbiased information.



1.4 Disposal, Memorialisation Preferences and Motivations for Choice

Overall, consumers had a good awareness of general decisions, such as choosing between cremation or burial. When we sought deeper details about the product information, respondents found it more difficult to answer.

A prevailing preference for cremations was evident. In summary, 58% preferred cremation, 34% preferred some form of burial (traditional or natural burial and mausoleum) and 12% had not decided, either leaving the choice to others or not considered.

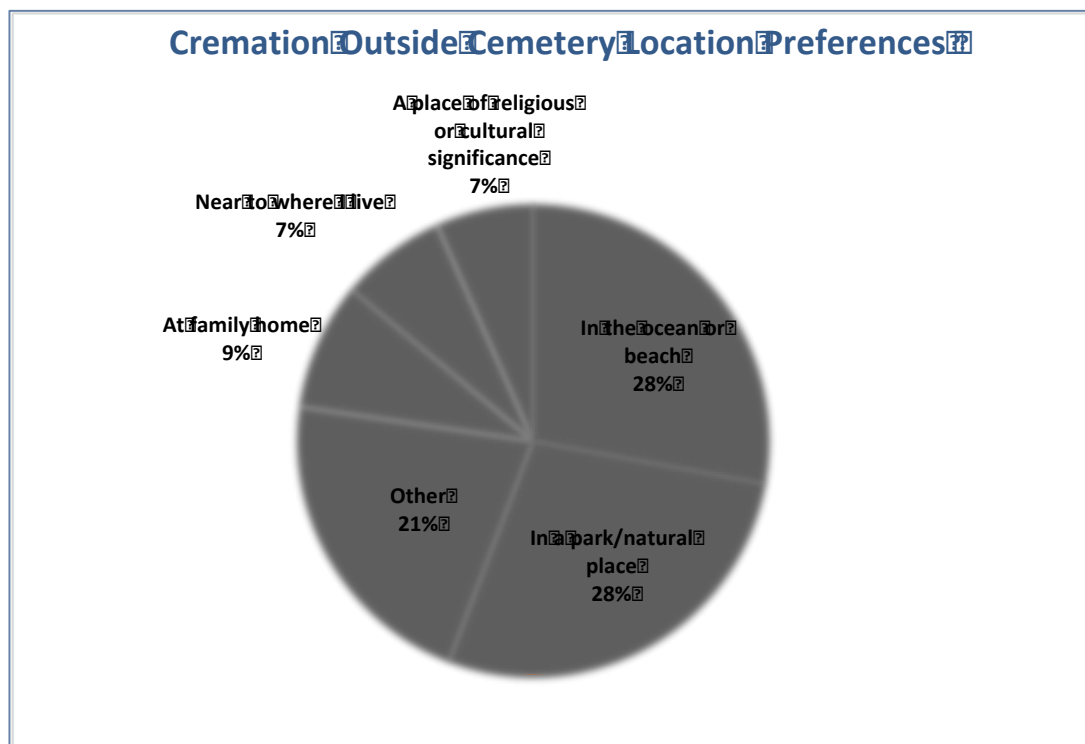


Cremation outside a cemetery – location preferences

As 44% of all respondents wanted to have their remains scattered outside the cemetery, we need to understand where they would consider/request to have their ashes scattered as this could highlight important insights and opportunities for the cemetery sector.

When asked where individuals preferred to have their remains scattered, a common theme emerged with 56% of respondents who chose cremation, indicating the ocean or a natural place would be their desired location to have their remains scattered.

Key Insights: When we look at this figure compared to the total population, we can determine that one in four people want their final resting place in a park, ocean or natural place. This is an important consideration given the limited guidance and support people have for this preference.

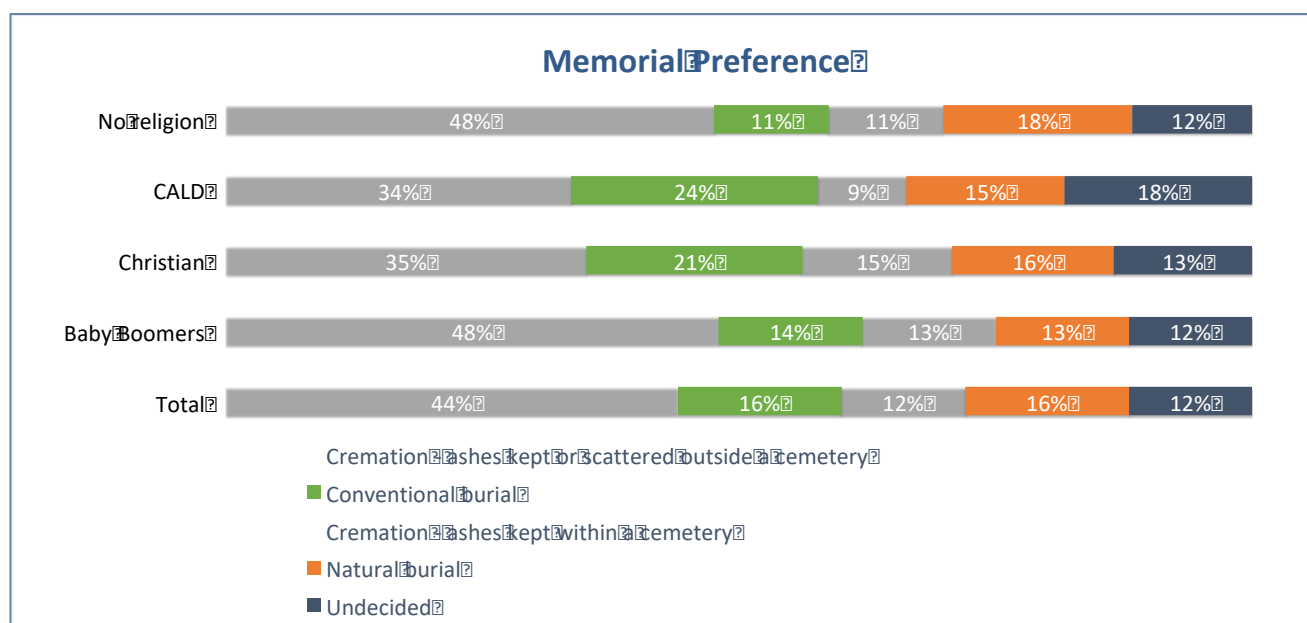


Memorial preferences across major demographic groups

The following graph shows the differences among the major demographic groups we have analysed for this study. When comparing and contrasting each cohort, we can understand their preferences in comparison to major groups.

Key Insights

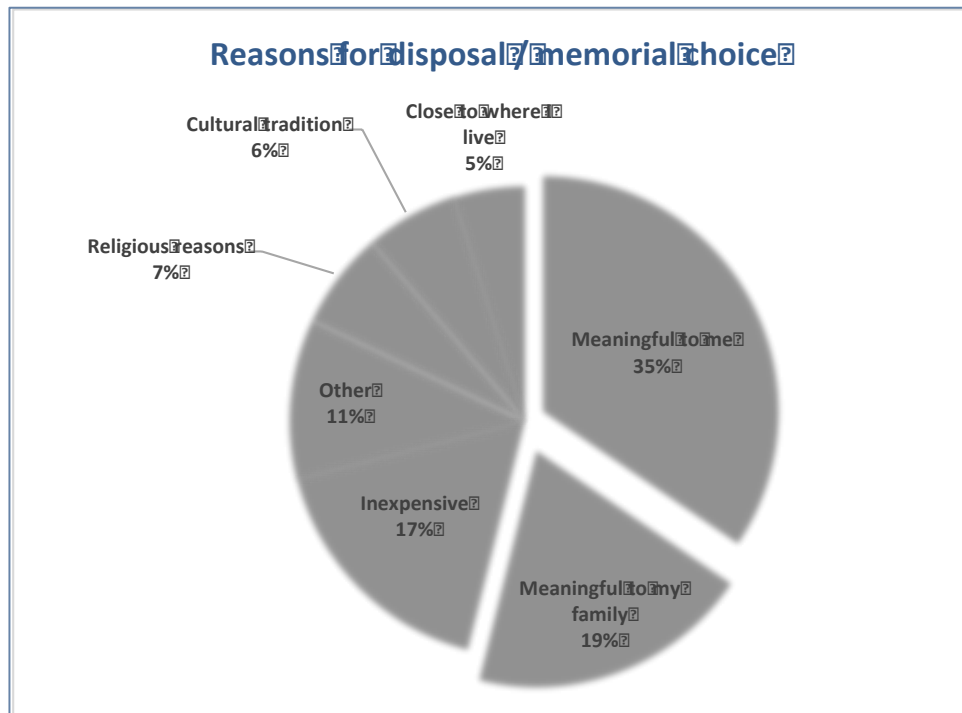
- The less religious the individual, the less likely they are to be interred in a cemetery (cremation or burial).
- The less religious an individual the more likely they are to pursue natural or 'unconventional' interment options.
- CALD (Culturally and Linguistically diverse) groups have the greatest intended interest in being interred in the cemetery (48% indicating an option within a cemetery).
- CALD groups are the most undecided group and potentially the least informed of their choices in the Australian context.
- Christians have a significantly higher interest in interring in a cemetery than those who identify as 'not religious'.
- Baby Boomers and those who identify as 'no religion' share the highest interest in being cremated and scattering their ashes outside a cemetery (48%).



Reasons for disposal or memorial preference

Overall, people seek out meaning to either themselves, or their family, as the main reason for their choice. The data indicates that regardless of whether someone chooses to be in a cemetery or not, their choice is most likely driven by the meaning it has to them personally or their family. To a lesser extent, price is a consideration.

We conducted this analysis into different product groups and segments and these themes still emerged as the main reasons for choice across all products and cohorts.



1.5 Summary Analysis

We have learnt that CALD and religious groups are more likely to inter within a cemetery – they have a more positive perception of cemeteries and they are more likely to visit loved ones. Whereas those who identify as not religious and/or Australian-born are more likely to cremate and have their remains scattered outside the cemetery.

Access to information and channels currently sought out by the vast majority of people was mostly directed to private channels such as funeral directors. Being the common channel, it is important to consider the exposure of vulnerable members of the public (especially older, and CALD groups who are less certain about where to seek information) who may be exploited due to gaps in their knowledge.

Across all cohorts and groups, people preferred to be cremated and scattered outside a cemetery (one in four). Their motivations and reasons for this preference were personal and unlikely to be influenced by cemeteries.

Cemetery trusts should consider the above insights for their future use of cemetery space. The allocation of grave locations is at odds with the majority preference to have natural spaces with water, in some ways indistinguishable from parkland.

5. Baby Boomers

Introduction

The group referred to in this report as 'Baby Boomers' (BB) was born between 1946 and 1964. While commonly thought to be primarily individuals of Anglo-Saxon background, the study revealed that the group categorised as Baby Boomers was culturally diverse. The Baby Boomers (BB) formed the largest category in the study.

Of the 82 study participants, 59 belonged to the BB category. This number is based on age range rather than a self-identified BB category. While recognising the BB's specific historical context of a post-WWII western society, we utilise this concept to examine all individuals within the age range regardless of their cultural, ethnic and religious background. This is because all participants are either an Australian citizen or permanent resident (PR). Hence the broad definition is applicable for a study about the Australian society.

Overall, it seemed like the BBs were becoming more aware of the different options and choices they could have when it came to funeral rites and memorialisation. New media technology was an emerging theme based on the fact that many mentioned 'online search' as an important way for them to 'shop and look around'. However, this result needs to be treated with caution in case our data was drawn from a particular social group that tended to be well-educated or technologically savvy. Most BB participants indicated that they either worked, or used to work, as a professional (such as a banker, accountant, teacher, researcher, and medical staff) or owned and operated their own business. We note that BBs who were uncomfortable with the topic would not have participated in the research.

The BB group offered great insights to the research topic because many in this category had dealt in some way with death at some point of their life leading up to participating in the study. Some in this group were aged in their early 50s (that is, born in the mid-1960s) and many were either approaching or already at retirement age. Baby Boomers revealed dissatisfaction with the commercialisation of funeral arrangements and memorialisation. They desired greater choice and flexibility rather than locking in decisions about funeral and memorialisation practices. These desires are explained in the following sections, which are framed by the themes of the interview questions: awareness of cemeteries, access to information, preferences, decision-making and values.

Awareness of cemeteries

Interviewees were asked about their experiences with cemeteries, including details about visits and frequency. They were asked to comment on whether they would visit a cemetery for reasons other than a funeral. Their views on their feelings of cemeteries generally were also sought. This section addresses the interviewees' responses to these questions. The following points are expanded in this section.

- Experience with cemeteries varied.
- Most distinct difference being between Anglo-Saxon (Anglo) BBs and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) BBs.
- Anglo BBs much less likely to visit a cemetery other than for a funeral service.
- Anglo BBs tended to have negative views of cemeteries based on past recollections of neglected cemeteries (in country areas).
- Exceptions included an interviewee who was recently bereaved and another who worked in the industry - both found the cemetery peaceful and comforting.
- It was notable that CALD BBs had a far more positive attitude towards cemeteries even if they did not have family or friends memorialised there.
- CALD BBs appreciated the beautiful and peaceful surrounds.
- Interviewees from both groups indicated that the cemetery was a place of history and learning.

Experience with cemeteries varied with the most distinct difference being between Anglo BBs and CALD BBs from diverse migrant backgrounds. Anglo BBs indicated that they were much less likely to visit cemetery other than for a funeral service. They tended to have negative views of cemeteries based on past recollections of neglected cemeteries, sometimes in country areas. For example, Claire, held a negative view about cemeteries in Australia. She indicated that she visited a cemetery only to attend a funeral: 'For the ritual of the funeral and for the gathering, the family gathering surely, but I would never wander in a cemetery here' (Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Christian). Claire further explained:

You know at the times when I have attended family funerals ... it's just rows and rows and rows of cement and plastic flowers and [that] doesn't touch me at all and I don't have anything to contribute.... You can't light a candle or ... it doesn't seem to be an interactive process. (Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Claire did not visit her parents' gravesites and her negativity towards the cemetery seemed linked to her view that good land was not being well used:

My sisters visit the gravesite [of my parents, in rural Australia] ... I have never visited. Because my mother and father are not there and as soon as I see a cemetery, I think what the heck are we doing as a community? That is what my feeling is. This great big huge dead cement city is expanding and expanding taking up good land. That is how I see it.
(Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Claire believed that although her parents were buried in the cemetery that they were not really there as 'the body is simply an empty vessel'. She described cemeteries in Australia as 'cold'. However, she had a contrasting view of cemeteries overseas:

In Austria, cemeteries are so welcoming, they have candles in them at night and it's like you are welcomed in and feel very comfortable ... I have seen it in Europe and Scandinavia and Austria ... Because for me it was more like an exploration of a different culture, a different way of being and they had totally different ornamentation and rituals and candles were being lit on a daily basis. It was alive. It wasn't a 'deadly' bone kind of place. It seemed to be welcoming and warm ... (Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

There were exceptions – for example Jane (60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian), who was recently bereaved and found comfort through visiting Springvale cemetery. She indicated that she always felt comforted after a visit to her recently deceased husband's memorial site:

I have been a few times, and I think sometimes when I've gone [it's] because I felt a need to go there. And I feel quite comfortable going there. It's almost what do you say, not exactly a relief ... well the first couple of times it was ... for me ... You know they've gone ... you know you are only going to see a name and you can put a flower there or whatever. Each time I've gone, I've taken just a rose out of the garden. And there's a feeling of ... (pause) you are pleased that you've been.... When you [are] there and you spend that little bit of time ... you come away thinking, that was good, I'm glad I did that. I feel better for doing that... not that I spend huge amounts of time, but when I have been, I've gone across to that café, got a drink, sat at a table outside ... under that tree, in the sun, by myself just in your own thoughts and it's actually ... comforting. And I suppose over there, it's a bit like being in a big garden. Which I quite enjoy anyway.

Yeah, it's not daunting, it's not like when we occasionally went to Grandma's grave in Ballarat, it's kind of spooky, because it's all graves and they are all over the place and not well kept ... not so good. (Jane, 60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian)

Margaret provided similar information. She indicated that although visiting the cemetery was not necessarily 'her thing', she was relatively comfortable with the surrounds. She also made the comparison between old, weedy country cemeteries and the well-kept urban versions:

Beautiful places, they are sort of parks really aren't they for nice, quiet contemplative places. They are always well kept, or the ones I've seen. I suppose really the old ones out in the country you know like from the 1850s or something are a bit weedy. But the modern, urban ones seem to be very well kept and pleasant places to be, so it doesn't give me the heebie-jeebies going in. (Margaret, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

An interviewee of Indian background, with Zoroastrian belief, offered a glowing appraisal of the cemetery in Box Hill, Melbourne:

... we've got the Box Hill cemetery and we live in this area. And in fact, we do sometimes visit the cemetery as a place of beauty and peace. And even though we have no one from the family or direct friends buried there, we do once a year, sometimes even more, just go there and you know, pay our respects to those who've passed away. So, I think I remember mentioning it to someone some time ago and she said, she kind of laughed and said oh that's sweet. And I said, it's because we are cut away ... cut away you know from our elders and family and all who have passed on back in India. And this is our way of paying respect to those who are buried there. And it's so beautiful and peaceful and you know the flowers and the headstones and the beautiful trees and very well kept. (Deepa, 60s, Indian, Zoroastrian)

Interviewees from both the Anglo and CALD BB groups indicated that the cemetery was a place of history and learning. For example:

It's also a very historical place. The Box Hill cemetery. If you go into the areas where they got the crypts of families. Some very, very wealthy families obviously in the past who could afford like a mausoleum and then they've got anywhere between 2, 5, 10, 15 even people of the same family in that little mausoleum kind of thing. There's such a lot of history that you read there, in terms of who they were and what they did and what trusts and the amount of charities that have been done. And of course there's a lot of war history as well – World War 1 and World War 2 – because it's such an old area that you do have people who have come back from the war and then obviously they passed away. (Svinni, 60s, Indian, Zoroastrian)

Deepa also valued the cemetery for its historical information:

... also infants. Sometimes if you go in you see so many children, they've all died of the typhus and things like that. And it might seem macabre or it might seem weird but it's not. Especially I think for migrants like us, who may not have that kind of historical perspective, going back. You know families talking three, four generations. This gives you, as [my husband] rightly said, a historical perspective of that place and area. You can see the typhus took so many people. You know because it's that same time. The same couple of months, and they are young, old and death is the true leveller. A lot of Indians get a bit taken aback, especially Indian communities ... And they say, my god why do you visit it you know ... dead place ... a place of death, but it's historical and it's also your way of paying respect to people who made this beautiful place of Whitehorse and Box Hill whatever... (Deepa, 60s, Indian, Zoroastrian)

One interviewee indicated that her experience with cemeteries was 'fairly straightforward'. Based on two experiences, 'one at Springvale and one at Altona memorial park ... they've been ok...' (Tina, 50s, Anglo-Australian, no religion)

Margaret commented that she visited cemeteries only 'very rarely'. She indicated that generally she did not feel the need:

So I certainly have been mostly to Springvale, but it just depends where people are buried. So my most visits would be because of the funerals being there or a lot of people don't have churches anymore, so they use the chapels at the funeral place. So I've been to several at Springvale and different chapels down there. If I'm in the area I'll call into my parents graves there, they are in the same grave so there was quite an age or a difference in when they died but they are in the same plot. I think it was a double one. But I don't head out there every Mother's Day or Father's Day or birthdays, so I just remember them as they are. (Margaret, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

As demonstrated above, experiences with cemeteries varied. The most distinct difference being between Anglo-Saxon and BB from culturally diverse backgrounds. Anglo-Saxon BBs indicated that they were much less likely to visit the cemetery other than for a funeral service. They tended to have negative views of cemeteries based on past recollections of neglected cemeteries, sometimes in country areas. There were few exceptions. It was notable that BBs from culturally diverse backgrounds had a far more positive attitude towards cemeteries even if they did not have family or friends memorialised there. These people appreciated the beautiful and peaceful surrounds.

That the cemetery was valued as a place of history and learning added an interesting dimension. It seems that those with negative views had experienced challenges with accessing information.

Access to information

The participants were asked if they had planned a loved-one's funeral. They were asked if they were aware of what options were available and from where they sought information. They were also asked to comment on issues of trust in relation to the information source.

- Most indicated they would go to local funeral directors.
- Use of online information.
- Tended to follow instincts.
- Concerned about being exploited at a vulnerable time.
- Some funeral directors considered to be 'unpleasant'.
- Idea of 'shopping' for a funeral not appealing.
- Need more choices visibly on the market to allow for creativity.

Generally, many indicated that they would go to local funeral directors, while some indicated the use of online information. Most tended to follow their instincts and were concerned about being exploited at a vulnerable time. The idea of 'shopping' around for a funeral was not appealing. Some funeral directors were considered to be 'unpleasant' and there was an evident need for more choice to be visibly available on the market to allow for creativity. Funeral directors in some instances were thought to have 'this very sort of aggressive business approach'. (Tina, 50s, Anglo-Australian, no religion)

Despite many interviewees indicating that they would first seek guidance from the local funeral directors, these service providers tended to be negatively viewed. For example:

... it's probably more the funeral homes ... where you feel very much that you've been pushed through a whole business and that they are imposing certain things that are obviously going to be more costly and you feel very much that you are in this incredibly vulnerable point of your life. And therefore you feel almost a bit exploited that you feel like you are not in control. Unless it's been prearranged as per someone's request and both my sisters know there was no instruction, so it was really ... we had to develop everything in conjunction with the funeral home, which was really unpleasant both times. (Tina, 50s, Anglo-Australian, no religion)

However, Tina's experience with funerals at cemeteries was more positive. She commented:

Well, I've had a couple, one at Springvale and one at Altona Memorial Park, so they've been ok ... it's fairly straightforward with the actual cemeteries... (Tina, 50s, Anglo-Australian, no religion)

For Claire, planning a funeral was an issue yet to be worked through:

I have no idea what I would do. I would be going from the person ... say for example it was my partner ... we would have talked about how he would want to be honoured towards the end of his life and if he would want to be with his family, then I would honour that. And I would be going through the process of finding the best way of doing that. And obviously his family that have gone before him are somewhere already. So that's where I would start. (Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian Christian)

Information was often sought from a variety of sources. For example, past experience, word-of-mouth and the internet were sources where Margaret indicated that she would seek information:

Probably past experience, probably the internet these days. I haven't collected brochures or anything like that. [I would] probably would maybe ring somebody up and just would say, "What services do you offer?"

So that would be by telephone, internet, past experience, possibly friends. Just if they say they were happy with White Lady, oh well we might go with them or we didn't like Allison Monkhouse or whatever. Word-of-mouth perhaps. (Margaret, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

Margaret also indicated that she would be happy to seek information from funeral directors but would rely on her instincts as a guide as to who she preferred:

Yeah, I would listen to what they had to say but you just get the vibes or compare to say, if it wasn't urgent, then you could compare what they were offering. So in the survey [relating to this project] I think I ticked 'neutral'. I haven't really met any that I didn't particularly like but some I like better than others. (Margaret, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

Another interviewee, from an Indian background thought that there was 'a little bit of knowledge' available and indicated that every temple distributed information about where goods to help people could be left in honour of the deceased:

Or they get their information from back home also from India. Yes that day is coming on 14th of April and you can go and do this and things like that. So there is a link ... also digital media is making the link so easier and people are taking full advantage of all that. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

Often the interviewees had not previously thought about where they would access information. However, when asked, they commonly indicated that they would first go to funeral directors and family members.

Jane recently had to organise a funeral for her husband who had died suddenly and immediately after disembarking from a cruise ship in Sydney, New South Wales.

Well we didn't [know where to start], to be honest. Because [my husband] had to go through the coroner and it was pretty obvious thing that we hadn't anything planned or organised. Hadn't really even talked about it. And they suggested ... they actually said to us, you know you've got to ask now what's the next step, how to go about things. Because it's not like you were here initially [in Sydney] because we still had the other side of things to do. But they said the best bet is to go looking in the [local] area for funeral directors and shop around. I was horrified when I heard that. Could not believe it and I thought, shop around for a funeral? (Jane, 60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian)

Having her husband suddenly dying in Sydney created a traumatic situation with many complications. Jane shared the following about her experience:

The Coroners [said] look up your local funeral directors. Didn't want any [of them] to be honest. Anyhow, we came home [to Melbourne] and you sort of know of a few in the area. We knew of the one opposite Knox which [my husband] used to say, oh yeah that's the train stop at the end of the line ... [My son] said, you've got to go to Heritage, the one that has the carriage [out the front]. I had been to one service there and he said oh they are good. The ones he'd been to. We went to another one ... called Bethel or something. Somebody had said to us, go to Bethel. So it was in Mitcham or something and we were like, its creepy.

It was like in a semi industrial area ... it was almost like in a factory done up thing. And what was the other one? ... Le Pine? My son did the ringing around like, come on we've got to do it. That was the horrible thing, as we had to make phone calls. Anyhow [he] did. And of course you had to make appointments. Apparently, that's what people do. I didn't know. So we had set times. We went to Heritage first, that gave us a good feel, a good vibe. Then we went to the Bethel one. I think it was the woman as well ... you go to this thing, it's like a factory on the outside and you go, this is not right.

She was trying to be way too nice. So it's like ... that's definitely black mark. We went to the one down here, opposite Knox and she was so disorganised. If you are disorganised that means the rest of it is going to be disorganised. And we didn't even bother to go to Le Pine. Because they were like, 'Ah just turn up'. And it just seemed to be a bit of fob off sort of thing. And so we just went with the gut feeling and went to where we did. So that's how it came about. Because I actually questioned mum about it then. I said, how did you decide who dad was going to have? And her response was, 'just the local one'. So maybe things were different then. But it seems from what we can gather, people must go around certain ones unless, they've got one in mind. To then get the feel. Even when we went to Heritage, the first one, he said have you got others to go and see. Go and do it. And see what you think ... And then we rang and said we'll come back. And we went back the next day. He said, 'I knew you'd be back'. (Jane, 60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian)

Most people dealt with the issue of seeking information when they were confronted with the need to organise a funeral. It was not generally knowledge that was previously sought.

One interviewee, who believed he would soon need to organise a funeral for his ageing aunt, thought that he would seek information from several sources. He indicated that he would begin with the wishes of the person:

Someone said to me, it's the most important thing that exists in the will is the wishes of the person who is passing, if they have put something down. If they haven't put anything down, I would probably look for a location that would be central to a lot of people. The idea of being together was more important than the location itself. So I'd find something local that was within the peoples reach ... I would probably ring a number of funeral places and a cemetery place, if nothing was decided and a final cemetery was not located, not decided by that person ... So it will be about gathering information from three or four places before I did anything else. [He added], I haven't thought about it, [but] I would assume I would seek and probably get information from relatives ... I would be relying a bit on others information and if someone said, don't go here, well I would probably take their advice. (Robert, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Agnostic)

While Anglo BBs tended to seek information from funeral directors, CALD BBs tended to refer such matters back to their own ethnic and cultural community (for example, Chinese, Greek and Jewish communities) rather than contact mainstream institutions such as funeral directors.

The difference between the Anglo and CALD BB groups was an interesting area warranting further attention both in terms of accessing information and preferences regarding funeral rites and memorialisation.

Preferences

Interviewees were asked if they had thought about their final wishes and whether or not they would follow family traditions. They were also asked what aspects were important to them, did they have preference for cremation or burial and where would be their preferred resting place.

- Most had thought about final wishes.
- Thoughts tended to follow loss of family member.
- Most indicated they would do things differently to parents.
- Generally choices needed to reflect the individual rather than tradition.
- Most preferred cremation.
- Ashes allowed for mobility (seemed to reflect the mobile world).
- More importance placed on the spirit rather than the body.
- Preference for options outside the cemetery.

Most had thought about their final wishes and these thoughts tended to follow the loss of a family member. Most also indicated that they would do things differently to their parents. For Baby Boomers, choices generally needed to reflect the individual rather than tradition. This trend was the case for both Anglo and CALD BBs, but for the latter group to a lesser extent. Overall, most interviewees indicated that they preferred cremation. One of the reasons for this choice was that ashes allowed for mobility, which reflected the interviewee's mobile lives and the contemporary mobile world. Another reason for the choice of cremation was that there tended to be more importance placed on the spirit rather than the body. One major finding was that there was often a preference for disposal options outside the confines of the cemetery.

The preference for options outside the cemetery for many meant choosing a meaningful final resting place or a place to conduct their grieving and memorialisation. Scattering ashes at a meaningful place was the most frequently mentioned alternative mode of memorialisation. In contrast with their experience with the funeral service providers, many BBs did not have a poor experience with the cemetery. In fact, most people appreciated the contemporary approach of cemetery of being inclusive and open in relation to landscaping and community engagement, for example.

Nonetheless, they did not consider the cemetery to be the only possible resting place. Rather, many believed that the cemetery as a resting place was no more than a long-held tradition that was imposed on individuals rather than an individual choice. Further, many BBs indicated that they preferred a personalised and small-scale funeral – hence, in selecting the funeral director they generally prefer

someone who is adaptable to different cultural, religious and personal requirements. Some individuals reflected on their poor experience with funeral directors, which was often to do with the costs involved and the level of service provided.

While some communities preferred burial, for example Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim and some Christian groups, there were exceptions. One interviewee explained the circumstances for those with Macedonian Orthodoxy faith:

With the Macedonian Orthodoxy if you are baptised in the church, you are expected to be given a service in the church. You don't need to, but 99% of the people do it. Orthodoxy doesn't allow cremation. The priest will give you a service for the church, but they will not come to the cremation. Whereas they will come to the burial site for their final act of their service for the day. The priest is there, even when the coffin is going down, they will continue with their service. So that's a bit of a thing. In terms of changes? No, they're fairly long-term customs ... we have not changed anything for thousands of years I assume. (Chris, 50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox)

When asked if he had thought about what he would prefer himself, Chris indicated that he was unsure. However, he did share some of his thoughts about what might be on his 'list':

I don't know to be honest with you. I thought about it, but I would like a sort of non-religious thing where you just get friends to come and say a few things about you, play some good reggae music that I like and my favourite songs and that's it. That will be my list, I don't see myself as from the church and that's pretty much 100%. (Chris, 50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox)

When asked about his preference between burial and cremation, he indicated that he had discussed it with friends:

I've had this discussion with friends and some have said cremation for them and I said, just the thought of being burnt, I'm not sure whether I'll like it. Not that it matters of course ... Well look I am ambivalent to it, I'll be honest with you. But if anything, if I had my choice that's what I would like. I would like someone to be master of ceremonies to celebrate life ... rather than [to mourn]. There is no word in the Macedonian Orthodoxy when someone passes away to celebrate life, it's to mourn. It's to grieve, so it's very different culture that I have. My parents' generation, you don't celebrate a life, you actually grieve it. (Chris, 50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox)

Cultural ties influenced many interviewees' decisions but nonetheless the result tended to be a hybrid form of funeral and memorialisation. For some, the effort was taken to return ashes to the originating country while others found ways to scatter ashes here in Australia.

There are few ashes which have gone back. That I will say about our age group, about 50/50. Fifty [%] decide to take them back, or family take them back and the rest they just try to disperse it here. And 50% is a big number and that's where the SMCT [and] I was talking, that if we can create something, and where people can come and disperse their ashes and complete the final journey of life. (Jenny, 60s, Malaysian Chinese, Buddhism)

The trend to return ashes to India was thought to be a response to family influences.

... I will not use the word pressure ... maybe with family influence ... They may have had their grandparent or somebody in the family [that said], no that's our culture, that everything has to come back and ... go to the Ganges, then its cycle is complete. But a few with education and with experience, they thought alright, the Ganges also goes to the ocean, and the ocean is up here also, the same water.

So they decided no, it's more cost effective, environmentally friendly and less hassle in this one. So they decided to do it here. My mother was here when she died, and she had her desires, that she wanted to go back and live in one guru's place, where there was some teacher, religious teacher, and she wanted to spend rest of her life there. But, when she fell ill and she died here, we thought, that was not her wishes or will. We thought she always was talking to go there, so we took and there is close by there is a river, so we thought we will take her there. So that's what we did. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

Allen indicated that Hindus did not have cemetery sites. He explained that their practices meant there was no need. However, the desire to scatter ashes here in Australia is likely to become an issue that will need to be addressed in the near future.

At the end, most of us go with the crematorium and in crematorium, we get black box of ashes and then people decide, few decide yes, we want to send it back to India or we want to take it back to India, and few decide alright, we will go and dispose of somewhere in the running water here. So they go to maybe Seaford beach, there is a long pier in there, so they go at the end of the pier. And we have to be very careful we don't put any flowers and things like that to make the things more messy. And they just disperse and that was the whole idea when I was talking to William here at Springvale, that if we can create something here, but the logistics the problems, all those things will [be difficult] (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

The interviewee agreed that the worry about throwing flowers along with ashes was related to concern about the environment.

Definitely, because in every prayer people offer the flowers. So if one flower is offered by 50 people, 50 flowers are there going into the ocean, and before they decompose and break and this and that. So if everybody started adding that, then it will become a problem. Just thinking on those lines, otherwise no big deal also. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

It was interesting that in some cases couples had different ideas about end-of-life planning. It was what was described as 'a real mixture'. Margaret's decision was based on family traditions and her Christian faith. It seemed that her husband was also following family practices, as shown in the excerpt below:

A real mixture. So I'd probably take elements from both. So my own parents were church funerals and burials, the in-laws were in the chapels at the Gold Coast and they were cremations ... My brother-in-law was burial and assorted friends either way. So I like the idea of the wake ... on site, I think that's very helpful if you have gone to the cemetery it's just helpful just for everybody just to be right there and it's less of a hassle at home. My mum died when I was quite young, I was thinking, what are all these people doing in our house? Don't they know this is a terrible time, what are they all doing here? I do remember that. Dad's we had here (at home) so that was fine, he'd reached 100, so that was a celebration. So with the in-laws it was good to be on the spot as well, it was just less hassle for the relatives and they'd made the effort to get there and then specific people who were a little bit closer, they are welcome back home wherever it is. So that's sort of been the pattern of things really. (Margaret, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

Margaret indicated that the pattern would continue as she would opt for burial and her husband for cremation:

[Burial is] definitely my preference. Whereas as my husband was completely different, he couldn't imagine the worms, it just revolts him, whereas fire puts me right off ... But I guess it is traditional, so I'm probably conditioned that way. I mean I know that I'd be taking up room and he's only going to be a little niche somewhere and be environmentally better, and I'm thinking still I don't like the idea of the worms either. (Margaret, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

While following family traditions was the norm for some, other BBs had decided to do things differently. Indeed, the Anglo BB group revealed many diverse ways to celebrate life for themselves and their loved ones. Tina, for example explained how it was for her husband when he died:

He wanted a wake before he died, which we actually did, a week before he died, we had 250 people in our garden which was amazing. That was one thing that he did say that he wanted. And the other thing was that he wanted a coffin that was cardboard, so that it

would be sustainable, and it would have a forest design on it, because my business partner and best friend had died a couple of years before him and that's what she'd had, and I remember him saying, this is before he got ill ... that's what want, that's just amazing. Why use wood? ... You are not going to keep the coffin.

So that was only the [only] two clues ... that I had and obviously the wake we were able to do, and when we actually got to the funeral parlour, it was just a local funeral parlour. I hadn't even thought about arranging the funeral because I never really had an opportunity ... So it was sort of down to that very last-minute stuff where there was none of these rites or how he wanted to be remembered. So it was really trying to pull together elements of his life and create something through that. So when I went to the first funeral parlour, it was very much well this is the way it is, this is the way we do it, this is ... and it was like hang on, hang on, can I just digest this. 'Cos I just don't feel that's right. I don't think this is what my husband would want. He wouldn't want the chapel, with that music that doesn't say anything about who he is. She [the person at the funeral parlour] was getting quite annoyed because she just wanted to lock it in, you know. And luckily my niece, who is a very strong-willed young woman was like, hang on, just back off, this doesn't seem to fit with [Tina] and the kids and they need a bit of time to think through ... (Tina, 50s, Anglo-Australian, no religion)

In a reflection of his well-travelled life, Tina's husband's cremains were scattered in three locations that he loved. These included a vineyard in Burgundy, France; a volcano in Reunion Island; and the family's local beach in Williamstown, Melbourne.

This account demonstrates the types of options that many of the BB group wished to have open to them and why they needed time to think about what they would prefer for their loved ones. As concluded by Tina:

Our generation ... we've come from hippies and there's a lot more options I think, more on the market, even though you still got to dig around and find it, it's not obvious. But I think there's room ... you can be a little bit more creative. And make it up as you go along.

There needs to be more organisations like that one that will just say, ok fine ... what is it you want ... we'll just deliver it. The problem is that there is just not [enough available information] ... and you just go with what's the easiest and the most obvious, rather than something [that you want] ... Just because you don't know that it's there ... For me I guess it wasn't the actual ceremony that was [most important] ... I mean the ceremony was nice, but it was more the way in which we delivered the ashes that was way more intense ... (Tina, 50s, Anglo-Australian, no religion)

Many of the interviewees indicated that they wished to have their ashes scattered in a meaningful place. This preference was at times packaged with traditional funeral service practices in a formal setting. For example:

I would like a mass said by a priest with a eulogy with people putting photos up. I've actually already picked out some photos because I know people won't have any ... a lot of funerals only have pictures of you when you are old. So I had to pull out some when I was young – young and pretty versus old and wrinkly; and one with my horses. So things that reflect my life that other people wouldn't actually have and wouldn't know where to find when you've only two days to prepare it. So, I've actually got a bundle there. I've done my will. I'm happy to be cremated and I'm happy to have my ashes scattered in the ocean. (Stella, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Roman Catholic)

When asked if the preference for a mass and priest was due to her religious faith in Roman Catholicism, Stella commented:

Yes but it doesn't have to be a Roman Catholic priest, I wouldn't care if it was a protestant priest or a priest at the crematorium. I don't necessarily have to have the Roman mass said for me. I just would like a blessing I suppose. (Stella, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Roman Catholic)

Many interviewees had not thought in detail about their own funeral and memorisation and tended to have only broad ideas of what they would want. For example, Robert had two options in mind:

Not in any great detail. It would depend on what my partner thought about it as well. Nothing is fixed at the moment. The thing that stands out would probably be two situations, one to be buried, after cremation, to be with my parents, or if my partner wanted to have space next to one another, I would go with that, with her wishes. But if she didn't want to do that and wanted her ashes to be scattered I'd be very happy with that for myself too. (Robert, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Agnostic)

Baby Boomers wanted a variety of options and flexibility to move one to another. They were reluctant to lock in decisions.

Decision making

To understand how the Baby Boomer group made decisions and end-of-life plans, a series of related questions were asked. These included whether or not they thought planning funerals and memorialisation was important. They were also asked if there was anything preventing them from making such decisions and/or if they had any thoughts about when, or if, they may start planning. If

they had already made plans they were asked what aspects this included and what had prompted them to plan.

- Planning was important to some but not all.
- Loss of a partner/family member often triggered planning.
- Some seemed reluctant to commit to a plan due to changing circumstances.
- Found it difficult to make decisions, especially when vulnerable.
- Need more time to think about memorialisation.
- Want more options.

It was found that planning was important to some but not all and that loss of a partner or family member often triggered planning. Many seemed reluctant to commit to a plan due to changing circumstances. Also, in some instances, it was indicated by the interviewees that they would like more time to think about different memorialisation options. Further, BBs wanted more choice including less traditional options, particularly among the Anglo group. It was clear that it was difficult for many to make decisions when in a vulnerable state. Nonetheless, various influences at times led the interviewees to make decisions regarding funeral rites and memorialisation.

Lynne explained how she came to her decision to be cremated and have her ashes scattered:

Well I think what triggered that for me was when the cemetery started chucking people out after 25 years. I mean, in the olden days when you brought a grave it was yours for eternity. You go to England and that and there are people still in their graves from a long time ago but here they've got this policy that they are going to chuck you out after 25 years so why waste the money in the first place. Sorry, it's an economic decision. I think the cemeteries are not doing what they are supposed to do, it's supposed to be a memorial and they are not doing it, so I won't bother. (Stella, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Roman Catholic)

The suggestion above relates to a desire for permanency, which paralleled the views of migrants and CALD groups who desired such permanency in their original countries. However, for some there was a reluctance to commit.

There was in many cases a wish to have the opportunity to re-think plans. That is, they wanted options that enabled a change of mind. For example:

We have made, when we did our will, my husband and I ... wanted to be cremated and then our ashes scattered in places that are special to both of us. So, I've said a place back home in the UK and I don't know what my husband's is ... I can't remember now ... But

that was about maybe ... 10 years ago that we did our will and since then obviously we've been in Australia longer, so ... we feel more settled and now I think it will be a bit of a pain for someone to have the hassle of taking your ashes overseas. Maybe, now I sort of think, maybe I wouldn't ... perhaps I would let them off that bit. I don't think he [husband] said he wants to be scattered back home anywhere. I think he just said he wants to be cremated and that's it I think. [I am having] a bit of a rethink. The other reason I am having a rethink is because like there seems to be more and more options isn't there. I don't know if you've heard of ... this isn't anything specifically something for myself ... but my mum and I were discussing ... you can have a crystal made ... Have you heard of that? I have thought about that. And I have also thought about the body farm. Have you heard about that? (Alison, 40s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Among the Baby Boomer group, there was discussion around novel ways of memorialising and little evidence of denial of death. This however is likely to reflect the fact that those who came forward to be interviewed were comfortable with the topic. It is possible that those who knew about the project but preferred not to be interviewed may be in denial of the inevitability of death. However, Robert, when talking about his aging and unwell aunt, commented: 'This aunt has no children and she's been ... happy to have me doing a lot of things for her and I am the executor of her will, so I presume I would be deeply involved *if* something goes wrong' (Robert, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Agnostic) (emphasis added). It was notable that Robert spoke in terms of 'if something goes wrong' and not in the inevitable reality that death will take place. Nonetheless, decisions were given much thought in most cases.

For some, particularly those from culturally diverse backgrounds, it seemed the decision was easier as particular traditions were followed as far as possible and adaptation to western ways meant hybrid choices were not difficult to make. For Anglo-Saxon Baby Boomers it seemed more complicated for those who were not locked in to religious traditions and this group wanted more options and flexibility to change their mind along with changing circumstances.

Values

Interviewees were asked what key values in their life would they like reflected in their funeral rites. If they seemed unsure how to answer they were also asked if these key values were evident at other major life events, such as a wedding or the birth of a child, for example. The responses corresponded across most interviewees regardless of background and faith.

- Similar for most
- 'Good thoughts, good works, good deeds'

- 'Do as much as you can. Help as much as you can'
- Reflecting a positive outlook on life
- Openness, trust, honesty
- Respect for others' beliefs and wishes
- Concern for family and others
- Gathering of people important
- Concern for environment

Maintaining traditions was important to some:

Well, if you are religious, it's some form of personal satisfaction, personal faith or something, so you follow whatever has been passed down to you. I'm sure that's the same with any other culture or religion, I mean you follow the customs of the elders and the previous people.

Look its very similar to a Protestant or Catholic church. When you've got a church, you go on a Sunday to mass or whatever it is, but what you got to realise is that to mum's generation and those in their eighties and upwards, they basically grew up when Yugoslavia was communist state, when religion was not ... it wasn't banned, but it was not encouraged. If you worked for the government as a public servant or a teacher, you weren't supposed to go to church. Your theology was Communism rather than religion. A lot of these people I am talking about who are Macedonian, love that religious connection that their parents had, pre-1930s if you like, so but again the Macedonian Church works on the basis of, mass on a Sunday, there to baptise children, there to participate in wedding ceremonies and death, and we use the three in the same church. (Chris, 50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox)

When asked about the level of baptism in the Macedonian community, Chris commented:

I'd say probably over 90% or thereabouts. I think it's getting less, I think people are becoming more liberal, a traditional Macedonian ... I'm a bit left and centre, I would not, because I am not religious ... but I might be in that 10, 15, 20% of children of Macedonian background who do not follow for themselves. But I have done it for my mother, because that is what she wanted. I have been baptised, I haven't disowned my religion per se, but I ... am atheist in essence. (Chris, 50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox)

Many interviewees indicated that views differed between generations - above and below are cases in point:

I have donated my body to Melbourne Uni. So my body, my organs and everything. But who knows how I will die at the end. But on the papers, yes at this stage, my body is there and to follow that one also, I donate regularly still at this age, I donate blood, or plasma. For me, the body is again, as my culture taught me, just like a garment, once it's too old, my soul will come out and go into the new garment and this [body] will be useless, so do whatever you want to do with it. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

When asked if had talked about his wishes with his children, Allen indicated they had different views:

I have, but they don't agree at this stage, because they have got their own views. You can't force them, and the same thing, more sentimental also, how they typically talk to their parents, you're dying and you are doing this [donating your body to science], so in that way, they don't want to go into the depth. But I have to tell them, even my wife, she has signed my documents, but still she is not [doing the same]. So, the main purpose was, at the back of their mind, register everything and when the time and if its conducive like that, I may die in some circumstances where my body has to go for autopsy. And if it goes for autopsy, they will not accept it at Melbourne Uni. So who knows what the end is going to bring, then again as we believe in Karma. We believe in destiny, so because of that, we can't control everything, but we can make some plans and see what happens. So in our community, the way I know, there are one or two people who are thinking the way I think, but still lot of people stick to old values, old things. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

For Allen, who followed Hinduism, the temple was significant rather than the cemetery to pay respect and remember those who have died. He indicated that he went to the closest temple for information about how best to pay respects and offer help when someone dies.

[I go to] whichever is close. When I came [to Australia] there was only one Temple, but now there are so many. And people just go to any place and it doesn't have to be temple,

like they can go to the Sikh Gurdwara, they can go to another temple, or another religious place, or any other ... orphanages, or something like that ... wherever they can give something which can be utilised. Asylum seeker place. Launch Housing, and those kinds of places where things are going to be utilised for disadvantaged people. That is the idea ... The main thing [is] that ... you are donating something in their name, with the hope that all those benefits will go to them wherever they are, they will be better off. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

In the following account, Amy captured what could be seen as a major shift in values in Australia. She comments on the diversity of the population and appears to be shift for many from traditional institutionalised religion to more encompassing multi-faith spirituality:

So Australia is a very diverse and multi-cultural, multi-faith place these days. It's probably only a matter of time before there are official Interfaith studies. Most councils have an interfaith work group and people are working together more and more than they ever have ... Interfaith is not a religion, it's more a spiritual philosophy if you like. Acknowledging that there are paths to god or different interpretations of god but it's really celebrating what they share in common. And what they share in common is this concept of love I suppose. Though I think on the census [form], I probably put my own box in and put Interfaith. I think that's how I have approached it. Can't quite remember ... but our census documents aren't keeping abreast of the changes that are happening in contemporary Australia and therefore they are not collecting relative data in lots of cases ... there is always a lag in terms of the data that governments are collecting. Because they are actually not asking the right questions or the relevant questions, and so then we are always behind the eight ball. And so things like religion, if the people decided they belonged to an institutional form of religion [its noted]. But what are people doing in its place, so there isn't the question that follows on so how. Even an open-ended question so if you don't see yourself as religious how else can you describe yourself, because you know there is the rise of the 'I'm spiritual but not religious' type people and there is a lot of people are going to find spirituality but it doesn't look like organised religion. And I know that from my work at Spiritual Health Victoria. I know that quite distinctly. (Amy, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Interfaith)

Amy felt well-positioned to provide this account of the changes in individual's value system, which reflected many of the interview participants' views and practices. There was an overarching acceptance of diverse cultures and practices that often were based on the same sound principles listed at the top of this section.

I guess my interfaith background just gives me a very broad canvas on which I view humanity and it just like for the two years I was studying, doing an Interfaith Ministry course ... I was just so joyful. It was such a beautiful consummation of humanity and the tapestry of life, how people celebrate life and death and how different cultures and different faiths have done it and just sort of working through that and finding things that are in common and the things that are different. It was just really enriching process personally. It just lets me be open minded and I'm open to what people choose and I am interested why ... whenever people approach me to do a ceremony, whether it's a funeral or a wedding or whatever, I am just interested in everything about them and why and how and what are the reasons it resonates for them.... A lot of people keep a little bit of Buddhism, and a little bit of Christianity, a really eclectic mix in some ceremonies. And that seems to be more and more ... [with] the people I encounter. To me it reflects the global community, the global village that we live in. (Amy, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Interfaith)

Amy indicated that she ran a celebrant business 'tailor made to the client. That is, tailored to what has given their life meaning and purpose ... [and] reflected in their belief systems'. The interviews suggested that it was this type of individuality being sought by the Baby Boomer group in general.

Conclusion and recommendations

The data concerning the Baby Boomer group is extensive and rich. There is great scope for much more analysis that will no doubt reveal even greater insights as to the expectations and future practices of this group. The group is diverse as are their wishes for what happens at the end of their lives. It was clear that generally culturally diverse groups (aside from Indians and others who prefer the scattering of ashes) are more likely to look for cemetery space. They see the space as a privilege that they may not have previously had in their original country. Anglo-Saxon Baby Boomers showed strong tendencies towards a 'favourite place' outside the cemetery. They want choice and individuality. They indicated a concern for the environment that was not always well-informed and evident in their choices. That is, there seemed to be a need for much greater education about what was environmentally sustainable as decisions seemed to be based on assumptions rather than fact.

For many, there was great appreciation for the beautiful gardens in the cemetery and the importance of having a tangible memorial space. The historical aspect was also appreciated by some. It seemed that an emphasis on money on behalf of many in the funeral industry, and the lack of personal involvements from the deceased and the family members, contributed to negative perceptions to the process of making funeral and memorialisation arrangements.

There was strong evidence of hybridisation; that is, blended cultures but also some quite distinct traditions and cultural values that extended to decisions about funeral rites and memorialisation. Anglo-Saxon Baby Boomers were requiring less cemetery space that was eagerly being sought by CALD groups who appreciated the availability of burial space. By choosing disposal methods outside the cemetery, Anglo Baby Boomers are enabling the diversity of cemeteries. This is a key insight that will be further explored. Generally, there appeared to be a lag between what is desired and what is provided and permitted within legislation.

Recommendations

1. To increase awareness of cemeteries, develop and provide greater education opportunities of funeral rites and memorialisation options for Baby Boomers.
2. Increase access to information about funerals and cemeteries so Baby Boomers can make informed choices.
3. Provide more information about environmentally sustainable practices so Baby Boomers are correctly informed.
4. Increase services offered so a broader range of Baby Boomer preferences can be accommodated.
5. Baby Boomer's increasing preference for cremation suggests new environmentally safe ways of scattering ashes should be provided both within and outside the cemetery grounds.
6. Adopt practices that allow more time for Baby Boomers to have flexibility with choices.

6. Christian Funeral and Memorialisation

Introduction

Contemporary culture of death and funeral needs to be understood in the broader socio-economic context. Humans have been particular in their quest for the meaning of death and how they undertake the funeral. The kinds of influential elements in the quest vary slightly from one era to another and also from one culture to another. Indeed the variations are prevalent within a culture at a particular time. Much of Christian funeral and memorialisation are in transition and largely reflect the contemporary culture of secularisation.

Awareness of Death and Cemeteries

- The human search for the meaning of death and how they can come to terms with their fate continues, reflecting a particular era.
- An increasing number of people are developing an open attitude towards life and death. However, the culture of death-denying dominates.
- While the cemetery may be seen as a final destination for the deceased, study participants considered the cemetery to be meaningful and peaceful.
- Participants have the expectation that the cemetery should look more like a beautiful park to offer the visitors leisure.
- The cemetery with a meaningful significance will be the cemetery that the mourners or people will choose in advance. The meaningful elements include prior memorialisation of the acquaintances, distance from home or family members, and family connections.

Quest to understand death

Death is not a common topic for conversation in everyday life. However, as people age and experience the death of a loved one, their search for the meaning of death commences, often becoming confident to talk about death. A good number of people who participated in the survey and interview for the current study was indicative of this. Jackson's (male, 50s) quest for 'the meaning of death in Australia in the 21st century' is more than an individual quest, but the broader population. However, there may not be enough conversation about death in order to support the public. Christians feel that the church is supposed to be able to lead such conversation but does not have authority anymore under the current environment of secularisation.

Dillon (50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian) puts the point of grieving after the death of a loved one poetically: 'Grief is the price we pay for love, for developing connection and attachment, it's unavoidable but it's something that's not talked about.'

Depending upon individual beliefs, study participants' perception of death was diverse. Most Christians share Brett's view, 'Well, I don't see the end of the life, I think there is more because the Christian faith emphasises the fact of eternal life. Yes.' To them, death causes a physical farewell, but not in the spiritual sense. Johnny shares the similar view:

Yes, very much so. So even though within the Christian tradition we would say that the person who has died isn't actually dead, they're alive in heaven. However the reality is that they're not here alive on Earth and those who are ... and whatever that belief system might be around that is pretty irrelevant. (Johnny, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Christian participants were not unified in their perceptions of death and after-life. Some had other beliefs, 'My religious understanding is when you're dead you're dead. You don't go upstairs or downstairs, there's no upstairs. Upstairs is here on earth' (Frank, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian). For some Christians, human death is simply a return to where they come from.

Religion has a lot ... a massive influence, because a lot of us believe that there is an after-life. There's heaven and hell, and until I see a person being pushed into an oven and there's flames, so there's that idea of being burned up because we believe that in the Bible it says that a person is from the dust and shall return back to the dust. So we have that mentality that everyone is supposed to be buried. (Talia, 18, Samoan New Zealander, Christian)

Individual life experiences also seem to have a profound impact on people's perception of death. Johnny, with the experience of providing a ministerial service to a remote village in a developing country, notes:

We were actually very accepting of that and then when came back to Australia we were actually quite surprised about the way our thinking had been while we were away, because we were actually very open to the fact that a child could die quite young and that's part of living and we would accept that. (Johnny, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Johnny also noted what death could mean to the ones dying and those who are left behind. Those who are dying may have a chance over a period to reflect about 'coming to terms with the ultimate loss, and that's the loss of their life. And then for those who are left behind, they're trying to come to terms with what it means now to live without this person physically being present in their lives'.

Cemeteries

Role of cemetery

Those who have had visited on a few occasions and who have their acquaintances memorialised in a cemetery noted that the cemetery is a place of goodness, happiness and peace. This was especially so for those who have lost their loved ones after their long and suffering illness, old age and unexpected or sudden death. Participants saw the value of setting aside a memorial space and the government has responsibility to legislate a reasonable care of that space rather than otherwise (Johnny, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist). Interestingly, we have been informed that Samoan Christians seem to have readily accepted funeral rites as an integral part of human life, and for them the cemetery is a particularly 'comfortable' space (Talia, 18, Samoan New Zealander, Christian). Johnny recalls that the development of the Victorian market on the cemetery in Melbourne may be remembered negatively by some Melbournians.

Yeah, you sort of feel comfortable that you've been. When you have got there and you spend that little bit of time. And you come away thinking, that was good, I'm glad I did that. I feel better for doing that. (Jane, 60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian)

Yes. And cemeteries tend to be, by their nature, quiet and yet they can be contemplative, reflective, you can sit there and do all that sort of stuff. (Alfred, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Participants made occasional visits to the cemetery at the time of anniversary, Mother's Day or Father's Day. The cemetery remains a highly meaningful space for them, thus the role of cemetery as a memorial site was important to them, : 'The symbol of ritual is really, really, really important in the human condition and the human psyche and the spirit' (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

I have done tours with the, one of the cemetery trust groups, I've done tours at the Charlton Cemetery, the Pioneer and the so-called New Cemetery. It's not that new, it's 70 years old. And I've done a tour of the Springvale Botanical and all the different areas for all the different cultures. I found that very, very interesting. And my mother and father are scattered at Springvale and I quite like visiting the Springvale, I quite like visiting it, sort of, once a year and taking a few flowers and I just put a little flower around for the various people I know who have a little memorial there. (Melinda, 70s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

It was the memories and we used to laugh about things that they had told us or said to us or something. It was never sad, it was always good memories that came with it. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Social and historical significance of the cemetery was also recognised. The tombstones in the cemetery, for example, indicate the time of deaths of some children due to diphtheria or flu epidemic. The languages used on the plaques provides insights to past attitudes to death, religious or non-religious minds of the deceased. The styles of the monument also indicate the level of wealth of the deceased of their families.

And it was good. And you mightn't be there for hours or anything like that, you are just there for ... I don't know three quarters of an hour tops or something. Depends. And you can sit there just in your own little space where no one knows you. It's good you know. I think even if somebody did, doesn't matter. (Jane, 60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian)

Other participants noted subtle but notable changes to the roles of cemetery, and the cemeteries have been responding to the people's needs and reflecting the changes to the broader socio-economic contexts. For example, the cemetery continues with its traditional roles, such as, the place of burial and memorialisation, and also 'the space as a way of maintaining an ongoing connection to the person 'who has died' on the one hand (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian). On the other hand, the cemeteries are 'making an effort too, and this is partly as a result of commercial pressures to have other services there such as florists and coffee shops and wellness centres so seeing the life of the cemetery as beyond the burial and to having a kind of an ongoing role'. Dillon continues:

Some are taking a greater role around community education and developing partnerships with other organisations I think they are really interesting. I think technology is also changing the role of cemeteries and I would expect things, particularly with the growth and things like virtual reality and augmented reality for cemeteries to take on new roles. We've seen some examples of that in the US in particular where you can walk along a cemetery and you can use your camera to capture a QR code on a headstone and you can see a picture of the person or find out more about their story. So I think technology will inevitably change the nature of cemeteries. It may very well be that there will come a time where you can wear some virtual reality glasses and walk along a cemetery and actually see a photograph of a person that has died or even speak or etc. (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

In the transitional stage of shifting from burial to cremation, some may feel that the role of cemetery is not that significant anymore. Rhonda says:

Because a lot of people that I know, just scatter the ashes. You know, we live by the sea, so they scatter the ashes from the cliff, or they've got a place that they remembered their loved one or something and they scatter them there. It doesn't seem that people within our church community place a lot of emphasis on where the person is buried. (Rhonda, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

What makes a cemetery tick?

Well-maintained trees, gardens and beautiful surroundings in the cemetery were greatly expected and also somewhat expected (Kate, 60s, Polish, Catholic). Kate notes that a cemetery can be more than a cemetery if it is well-maintained:

We used to walk through the gardens. The gardens are very peaceful there. And I have known people to get married there. So I just find the way they keep the gardens, really beautiful. And I have an affinity with gardening. (Kate, 60s, Polish, Catholic)

Participants from different cultural backgrounds, such as Asia, have a greater appreciation of the Australian cemetery in general, as we found from another study (Han, Forbes-Mewett and Wang, 2018):

There's a lightness about it. Where I did go to cemeteries in Singapore and it feels really heavy. Whereas here, also there is a few differences. Like in Singapore most people burn there and have ashes, cremated. Whereas here I feel people are a bit more into burials still. Like when I went to SMCT also because it's a setting, there was a garden and you forget actually that you are in a cemetery. I'm sure there are some cemeteries, I used to live in St Kilda East where there was the massive cemetery nearby. That one looked a little bit creepy because it was just one after the other stone henges but I still think it's more. So the fact that you have a cemetery in the middle of residential in Australia; that will not happen in Singapore. Like in Singapore you have dedicated areas and they are tucked in the corner somewhere and you do this pilgrimage once a year and stuff like that. (Lucy, 40s, Indian-Chinese Singaporean, Christian)

Interestingly, a small number of people, discovering the beautiful surroundings of the cemetery, has considered the significance of the cemetery, 'I like the idea of coming to a place where I can talk to you' (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian). Yvonne was even persuaded for a burial as her future choice:

Because when my husband and I visit my mum, there's a memorial plot and it's huge and there's lots of trees and it's so nice and he say, 'Oh, I want to be buried here'. 'Ok then. You will share with me and my mum'. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

Beautiful natural surroundings and helpful amenities seem to be facilitating a visit to the cemetery:

I think it is, but I think the Springvale cemetery is trying to make it more. I would go again. I need to go when the roses are out just to see the roses. But apart from that, I have no desire, really, to go to the cemetery. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Somedays, they have jazz playing. And they've got the meals you know. So they want to make the funeral aspect of it more friendly. So people will be encouraged to go there. (Jack, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

What makes one choose one cemetery over another?

One's choice of a cemetery over another for their own need is based on their wish to be together with their past and present family members, friends, colleagues and other acquaintances.

I've got some friends buried there and I just wanted to see what the setting was and what it was like. Also, I knew there were beautiful roses there, so I went to have a look at the garden as well as the cemetery itself. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

A relatively easy access to the cemetery in terms of distance and well-maintained surroundings with trees and flowers also made important appealing points. A few have pointed the Springvale Cemetery as a good example.

Frank's mother's here and then his father is there. So she thought if I was there and Frank was there, we'd all still be together as a family. But it couldn't be but you know they're only across the road from us. Then Frank's grandmother is here and his wife and him are there and then we are over here. (Lucy, 40s, Indian-Chinese Singaporean, Christian)

So it sounds like it doesn't really make sense to you if you have to go to a cemetery that's far away from the family and also your parents' grave as well. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

The cemetery's surroundings, distance and other personal meanings attached to a particular cemetery were closely related to frequent visits and also their descendants' frequent visits to the cemetery. If not, the visits will not be frequent.

No, I'd say four or five times a year. Mainly ... if they were buried at Coburg, I probably wouldn't go at all. (Jackson, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Mum used to go every week and I used to go with her when I was around, yeah. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Others find it meaningful to walk around the cemetery as it says much about national history and also person aesthetics.

And I hope that I feel a connection with the spirits all the time, especially out in nature and everything. But look, I try, because she is a person who is close to me inside. But I go

there and it's a beautiful place, and sometimes it's meaningful and sometimes it's just nothing. (David, 40s, Filipino, Catholic)

Other comments

Some Christians found it useful and were grateful to their churches for offering the parish members memorial garden where the cremains/ashes could be spread into the garden, especially when the garden was well maintained. For them, the church garden is an alternative memorial site to the cemetery (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian). Undoubtedly, they would find the memorialisation in the church garden symbolises the continuity of the church family as a Christian.

Others felt that the strong tradition of family ties was gradually becoming 'loose', which was much more evident in the city than in regional areas. Not only was it improbable to visit grandparents' memorial sites, they were increasingly less likely to visit their own parents' memorial sites. Jack notes that this contrasts with 'the old days you used to take your children to visit the grandparents. We did. We used to take our kids to visit mum and dad'. (Jack, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Several participants noted that memorialisation of the loved ones was not necessarily in the cemetery, but in the memory, for example, past family home or places of family trip in the past. This means their visits to the cemetery were rare.

I remember in Adelaide some of my relatives and my mother and father were, their ashes were kept in little receptacles and marked accordingly and you could always go there if you wanted to. (Brett, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian Uniting Church)

Rhonda and her family seemed not to value the cemetery as a memorial site.

I can answer this one because when my mum and dad died, my husband and I don't believe in anything like that, because we would never go to like a cemetery when it was the anniversary of someone's death. And we've already talked about that. So if there was anything, it would be just be a tiny little plaque to say my name or something, but that would be the kids. If they wanted that, they could do it, but my husband and I, we would just like our ashes scattered somewhere. We don't even know where really. So we're not into that sort of thing, going to cemeteries and visiting and that. Because you remember the person, not where you go to bury them, for us. (Rhonda, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Participants who did not value the cemetery, often seemed to have a convincing reason or argument.

I've actually not gone back to the place where his cremated remains have been placed. So from my sense, the sense of death ends a life it doesn't end a relationship and there is a kind of psychological relocation that comes place rather than a geographic one. So from my point of view, I'm probably less likely to be dependent upon a physical place as opposed to thinking more in terms of an ongoing connection or relationship. I know that some people find cemetery visitations and certainly we've academics in Victoria write extensively on cemetery visitation and how that changes over time. But for me that's something that's not a particularly salient thing for me in terms of a place. (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Most Australian cemeteries seem to maintain designated areas for the use of specific Christian denominations. It appears that an increasing number of Christians do not necessarily desire to be memorialised according to their own religious denominations.

Special interest about the cemetery

In addition to their visit to the cemetery for the purpose of paying respect to the deceased or recalling their memories with the deceased, a good number of participants expressed their interest in genealogy, and this interest brings them to the cemetery.

I suspect that is part of it. I think family history is important because we are shaped by our upbringing and our experiences. Now those experiences are governed by say how our parents and grandparents were shaped ... So family history gives you an explanation of the grandparents lives and how the attitudes were passed on to the next generation so you can learn a tremendous amount, multi-generation through a family history search. (Alfred, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Australia has a significant proportion of its citizens born overseas. Especially many from European backgrounds seem to be taking keen interest about their family origins prior to and especially post arrival of their ancestors.

Well basically it's Bill's family we do most of the family history with because his ancestors came as First Fleeters and we've got a lot of family connections with the First Fleeters family. They were very prolific breeders, there were only five children but boy, oh brother, have they spread around this state and New South Wales. So different legs of the family have family trees and we have family get-togethers and that's really interesting. There's a lot of cousins out there, hundreds of them and my family are not nearly as ... well we go back to my grandparents who came out from England and I've seen family in England. But when we went to England it was Bill's family that we researched, not mine. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Alfred takes a great pride in his genealogical findings.

In theory the family should do it but sometimes, now I'm rare, in the sense that I know where all my great grandparents are buried and I can name all my great grandparents. Most people if you said, "Can you name your great grandfather?" would be, "No". And I know my great grandparents, my great, great grandparents and many of my great, great, great grandparents so I know who they are. And a lot of people, if I ask my brothers or sisters, they don't seem to have the same interest that I do, I've said to them, "Are you interested in seeing this?" "No". That's their perspective. (Alfred, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Jack observes that genealogy is nowadays considered a good business, which attracts many clients.

You know of course how popular the Ancestry business is and it's promoted by some very clever people. I, the chap next door, he fooled around with Ancestry and said, I'll look it up for you if you like. Where my Scotland antecedents were, but he could only go so far. I began to get interested in ... my uncle James, who my ... actually my birth certificate says, Alistair McKenzie. (Jack, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Bereavement support group

There is a recognition that the mourners are preoccupied with many tasks during the funeral rites and that the 'real' mourning starts after the funeral is over and the guests have left, 'So while we go to the funeral, it is after the funeral that people also need that support' (Kate, 60s, Polish, Catholic). The first birthday after the passing of the loved one, the first Christmas and all those family celebrations are the difficult occasions to face (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian). This makes some people realise the importance of having good conversations 'while they are alive' (David, 40s, Filipino, Catholic).

It was pointed out that the mourners need to be 'consoled' appropriately. The ones who lost their partner decades ago may not want to be communicated with 'sorry messages' (Kate, 60s, Polish, Catholic). Realising the need to support the people under bereavement, David (40s, Filipino, Catholic) has established a bereavement support group, 'Beyond Words', which caters for mourners from diverse groups in terms of their ages and cultural backgrounds, but mostly from an English-speaking background.

Bereavement support has become an important part of many Australian parishes with an increasing proportion of older people (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian). People from health professional backgrounds such as nurses seemed to willingly engage in such support groups.

I've been involved with people in death and dying from that side, but not the environment so much. I work with a Parish, so I've seen people, supporting them through death and helping with funeral arrangements and that things like that, whatever is necessary. Visiting the relatives afterwards, making sure that they're ok. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

This process of support also tended to renew and foster the human relationships. The support mechanisms in the community seem to make invaluable contributions to the aging Australian society.

And then we get to know his children, his grandchildren, and then if the widower is alone, we deliver food to him, you know that kind of stuff. I mean it's still ongoing because his wife is not there anymore. I mean there's a lot of things happening there, not just farewell to the loved one, celebrating their life of Gwen who passed away, but supporting Tony, the husband. So there's a lot of interconnection and things coming out from that sad event. A lot of good comes out of it. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

One of the big drivers about changing community attitudes is what we do is we create a more supportive community, a community that is able to sit with the anxiety or the discomfort of conversations around death, dying and loss. (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

There was also support groups helping those who go through terminal cancer or the end-of-life matters.

'Threshold Collective' is a collective of artists, painters and writers and film makers and story collectors, story tellers and dancers and we work with people that may have a terminal diagnosis and they're taking the end-of-life journey but they're still living while they're dying so they do that and do that well. Our catch is 'Living Well; Dying Well'. (Alana, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Access to Information

- A funeral is considered an important occasion for people to attend. It is considered more meaningful for some than attending a wedding.
- Attending a funeral is often an important source of learning about the funerals and provides information for their own needs.
- There seems to be an even distribution between 'enough' and 'not enough' in terms of the information available. This might refer to whether one is willing to look for information, rather than a clear lack or abundance of information.

Attending others' funeral

A funeral is considered an important occasion for people to attend. It may be more meaningful for some than attending a wedding. Attending a funeral is often an important source of learning about the funerals and provides information for their own needs. Dillon (50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian) describes a few different roles of a funeral:

(1) Celebrating a person's life, to build a narrative of who the person was and is. Acknowledging their life, also acknowledging their legacy is important. (2) But I think the other important role of a funeral is about developing a temporary community. People who are brought together through this common connection, so for me there is also a very strong social component of a funeral. It's about people being with others. (3) The third piece that I think is really important that I think is often overlooked is that a funeral provides the opportunity to experience the pain of the loss. I think in the marketing of the funeral industry, the whole idea of celebrating a life doesn't address the fact that part of the role of a funeral is for people to experience the pain of a loss – to actually wrap their head and their heart around what has happened. (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

The loss of a parent brings children from different places. As they were leading their own set of lifestyles, it could be a challenge to orchestrate a coherent funeral and memorial service (Jenny, 60s, Malaysian Chinese, Buddhism).

In a multicultural Australia, funeral rites based on different cultural backgrounds seem to enable diverse Australians to learn about each other's culture and perhaps create close bonds, relationships and understandings, consequently fostering a multicultural Australia.

I've been to a Greek funeral. A friend of mine died and I went to her funeral and I found that very different to ours. I had no idea what they were saying or anything only that they were walking up and down with the incense and then everybody got up and started walking down so I got up and walked down I didn't know what the procedure was but I didn't want to be the only one sitting in the church. I just felt that was very uncomfortable. What I didn't realise was I had to bend down into the coffin and kiss her goodbye and bless her and I done it because I had seen other people passed. And the family were so surprised and so happy that I respected their mother and wife so in the custom. But I said to them, "Well that's my belief it's your custom I've got to obey your custom". Anyway it made them feel better that of course I think I might have been the only Australian there. (Jennifer, 70s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

Attending a funeral is considered more important than attending a celebratory occasion such as wedding although there may be diverse approaches within each culture.

I think merely to support the family. That's why I go; I go to support the family. Especially when I go to a funeral, I don't always know that person. I only know them through people that attend our church or family friends. So it's just that support. That's why I would go.
(Rhonda, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Funerals were also understood as a healing process, especially for the mourners who have lost their loved ones and also for close family members, friends, and relatives. It presents as a time to farewell the deceased and rebuild the relations among the ones left behind.

I think it's for the living, because it doesn't matter to the person who is dead. It's basic when it's finished, it doesn't matter, but, yeah, I think it is for the living. My relatives live far away; they live in Queensland. And the community where I see them, I am seeing them regularly so I'm very happy just to have a simple ceremony. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

In a vast land like Australia, people not living in the same city may not see their friends or relatives for 20 to 50 years. However, if there is a death of a significant person, they seem prepared to travel a long distance. It is not only a way to express respect to the deceased, but a way to meet their friends and relatives and provide them with support. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian; Stanley 70s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Level of information available on funeral

There were mixed responses to the question as to whether there was 'enough' or 'not enough' information about end-of-life matters or funeral. The subjective responses result from one's ability to find information or whether they were willing to seek the information. Generally speaking, it seems fair to say there is enough available information.

Apart from the information we get for the Seniors from Julian Hill or Daniel Andrews because we are in their electorate and I have just emailed them to say why double up on all this printing (laughs) perhaps you could put the money into helping some of the homeless. (Kate, 60s, Polish, Catholic)

Those who said that there is not enough information, had waited until someone in the family passed away before they made inquiries. Sometimes, having a pre-paid insurance for funeral was all they had and they hoped that everything would be covered by the insurance.

Well you read about different aspects of it from time to time in newspapers and it comes up occasionally but I don't know. I think there tends to be a ... people they're not inclined to like talking about death and dying. And I think, to me, there's nothing more sure in life than death and taxes. (Brett, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian Uniting Church)

There tends to be a reluctance to discuss end-of-life matters, which can prevent some sectors from being better informed about funeral rites and procedures. Some volunteer organisations were aware of this potential concern and bring funeral professionals to an information session for the community members.

When I'm with my peers it's certainly not discussed at all. But interestingly enough in my volunteering and social work with Monash City Council, when we have information evenings, days or whatever, we are now inviting funeral directors to come and talk about funerals because it's more or less pushing that information onto people because we're all going to die at some stage so it needs to be part of the general conversation, and it's not. (Doris, 70s, Irish, Catholic)

Also, many Australians who migrated to Australia may not be well informed. Having settled in a new country, the funeral culture may not be something one becomes familiarised easily unless they actually went through the loss of their family member.

I imagine [handling death is] not dissimilar to Singapore because most also die in hospital so you'll have the paperwork from hospital. I don't know whether you're required to see the police to get a death certificate. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

Preferences: Burial and Cremation

- Christians (as well as some non-church-goers) prefer a religious funeral. Christians see the church still taking a critical and comforting role, especially for funeral services. In this ritual, the priest takes the key role.
- Memorialisation on a brick or a garden with a low cost is sometimes possible and is appreciated.
- Some participants still prefer full-body burial to cremation, in a cemetery with 'my' community connection.
- Some migrants' particular methods of burial are not met in Australia.
- There is a shift moving from burial to cremation.
- The choice of cremation is possible in an individualistic Australia more so than before.

- Cremains left in the garage – this may indicate that the significance of the dead body or cremains is much less today. Alternative methods are sought – to be part of a fish bowl under the ocean or cremains into the sky.
- Memorialisation remains a critical juncture for humans as they want to be remembered by their descendants. Memorialisation in a place with meaning and connection.
- Memorialisation is a family matter and the families often discuss and negotiate this. Families appreciate the idea of a family site – togetherness.
- Pre-purchasing the plot for burial or columbarium is fairly common. A small proportion of people may not be aware and don't take up the opportunity.
- A fairly rigid ritual is set for Catholics. Nonetheless, there are diverse styles pursued by individuals within a Christian tradition – an epitome of individualism.

Role of the church in funeral and memorialisation

Church helps and organises funeral service

The respondents' Christian beliefs and values draw the members of a Christian church community to form a close relationship. The fellowship they develop over a number of years lead the members to rely on each other during their frail ages and at times of happiness as well as sorrow, including hospitalisation for sickness and funerals.

I don't think it's necessary so much the religion, I think it might be comforting, but I think it's all the people that are at her church, because they live in a small village too. I think all the people in the church were absolutely wonderful. And they really rallied around.
(Alison, 40s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Mum had been a member for many years and they all knew her and they all were actively involved. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

As the members of a Christian community have observed how previous funeral rites are carried out, they know what will take place for their own death. This is reassuring to them, rather than worrying about the possibility that their wishes may not be fulfilled.

Yeah, they would help in the service. I mean because when someone dies in our parish, we do that too. You know, it's the ongoing way to prepare the church for this mass and you know talk to the relatives. And then go to their homes for the mass. Yeah, I mean there's a tradition and a ritual that we follow. And then we say it at the mass and we pray for someone who is dying, like a novena, we do that in our church. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

If a parish is sufficiently large, there are usually a few members providing a better organised support group.

If someone dies who is a member of our church, usually the person contacts me first. Because we're a larger church, they don't necessarily go to the pastor first. So my position at the church is I'm the pastoral care coordinator. So the call will come in to me first. I'm usually the first contact with the family, and then I run them through the process. And it might be that they don't know how to contact the funeral parlour and do all those things. So I help them through all the stages of it ... Well when I first came the church was in about 1996 and the church was 400 people, and there were no policies and procedures in place. So as the years have gone on, like I'd have a funeral and there'd be no structure, you know. And also, if I wasn't here, how do people know what they've got to do. So I started to develop policies and procedures and I've developed them more as things go on. As things change and develop, I've changed the policies and procedures. (Rhonda, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Christians have a simple funeral service

Judeo-Christian funeral rites have evolved over a long period, and it seems contemporary Christians may not necessarily expect their funerals to be particularly 'high and specific'. This trend could be a sign of maturity, paying attention to the relationship with their belief in God or indicating the rituals under the influence of secularisation.

I've changed that dramatically too. Because we had a sister buried early this year and it was such a long ceremony. I just thought you don't need that that long. So I have just said I want a very simple service at the graveside. Nothing else; just very simple. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Holding a memorial service in the church building may not be considered essential, depending upon specific contexts. It is often convenience and practicality that prevails in regard to where the memorial service is held.

No, I don't want a church service. My parents, we didn't have a church service for my mother and we had a service, but not in a church for my father. For my brother we had a church service because it worked out easier that way. We just changed; depends on what we felt was appropriate for each one of them. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Religious funeral wanted

While Christians have ‘toned down’ the complexity of the funeral rites, they generally want the core of the funeral service to remain Christian. This may be better understood when considering the culture in which those who grew up in Christian family may not attend the church service regularly. However, when they have their own children; the children often go through christening in a local church. The fundamentals of the participants’ beliefs about death and funeral are based on Christian teaching.

I think religion also has a big part because the Islanders are very religious. That’s Christians and Catholics. We believe that our family members should be returned back to the dust.
(Talía, 18, Samoan New Zealander, Christian)

Yeah of course, a traditional Catholic service. Even for my husband as well, yeah. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

Despite the broad trend to have a simpler service, especially in the context of secularisation, there are some who desire ‘fuller’ and more traditional religious service.

I think she probably did want some, but in our church we have the incense – we had that twice. And we didn’t need that. And the undertakers were anxious because they said, “We’re running late”. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Full-body burial preferred

Burial preferred to cremation

Burial has been a long-held traditional method of body disposal for Christians in many parts of the world, including Australia. Some seem to think that is the way it should be for Christians in particular. Others think burial method is much more ‘natural’ and this may not have much to do with Christian teaching that has been embedded in the minds of Christians.

For example, burial method was thought to be a better and more appropriate way to be ready for resurrection when Jesus Christ returns to His second coming.

My family have been buried and I have a feeling that both my sisters would want to be buried. (Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian Christian)

No ... when someone passes here, they probably would take their bodies overseas to be buried ... the family will want to take the loved one to be buried where they are. It’s [about] going back home. (Talía, 18, Samoan New Zealander, Christian)

One may not have seriously considered as to whether they would choose either burial or cremation. Yet, some would consider burial to be only natural and that is a proper way to go.

Full-body burial, yes ... it's not religious, just I've never really thought about cremation. I'm just happy with the fully body interment. I can't think of a reason for it. I certainly won't be here to know the difference. But if the full-body is interred and there's a memorial there it's just something more sustaining that people can visit I guess I don't know. It's not really something I've delved into too much. I think about it when other people talk about it but for myself I've never really considered it. (Alfred, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

A participant observed that burial method is generally more common in regional Australia than in the urban areas. Some migrants' particular methods of burial may not be met in Australia and those migrants tend to have the deceased transported to their previous home country, e.g. some South Pacific nations.

Cremation preferred

Why cremation?

Shift from burial to cremation

It has been a while since cremation became a more prevalent form of body disposal than burial in many parts of the world. Australia has followed suit in the last few decades and the interview data also reflect this trend. The majority of Australian people, or a good portion of the participants, seem to accept burial as a matter of course.

No my dad definitely will be cremated. I think it's a generational thing as well. I don't know about my aunties but definitely my Chinese grandparents I wasn't surprised. I will be slightly surprised if my aunties and uncles decide on the burial. At least for my parents, I know both of them are definitely cremation. (Lucy, 40s, Indian-Chinese Singaporean, Christian)

I have seen a full-body burial but I think the cremation is now more popular so that's my understanding. (Frank, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Choice of cremation is personal not religious

Interview data indicates that burial was more prevalent in the past for both religious as well as cultural reasons. Burial seemed a more 'natural' and taken-for-granted choice even a few decades ago in Australia. Christian, especially Catholic, teaching and tradition was leaning towards burial.

However, in contemporary Australia, middle-aged and older people seem to readily accept cremation as part of the culture or the way to go. The choice seems to be made rather confidently than otherwise. It is worth noting that while the choice of body disposal is personal, the influence of the broader social environment may encourage the majority of the population to choose cremation rather over burial.

More just a personal, practical point of view I think. Not a religious thing. I don't think our religion or any religion we've been involved in wouldn't have any strong opinions about whether a person is buried or cremated. More interested in the spirit I think. (Stanley, 70s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Cremation preferred

Participants seem to have developed their preference for cremation over a long period of time for diverse reasons such as environmental consciousness, convenience, practicality and some purely personal reasons.

Yes, I've prepared. In fact, as a result of that visit, I decided to be cremated. Because I look at all that land being held up. If everybody takes a piece of land, there won't be anywhere for people to live in the future. So I have redone my Will and I want to be cremated and buried in a pre-existing grave. So not taking any more soil or land. (Beverly, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Many people cared about where their cremains are scattered or interred. If they were unsure about the final place for cremains or would let their partner decide, cremation is a good choice as it offers them greater mobility rather than exhuming a grave.

If I had to make a decision now, I would probably say something portable, so either the crystal thing or being in an urn. So that way, I could go with whatever my husband decided. Especially because I am coming from overseas. And I don't think my husband would go back to England. If I passed away before him, but I don't know what I'd do if he passed away ... I might go back. I don't know how I'd feel. Obviously, it depends on when it happens. That will be sort of happens in the next 20 years or if he's still working, if we get to be you know in our dotage, then that might change too. At this stage [I would prefer] cremation. (Alison, 40s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Yes, you can hold onto the remains until you are ready to let it go. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

What kinds of cultural background one comes from is also an influential factor. If one is an only child with frail parents in their past home country, this also makes the choice difficult.

Definitely cremation. I don't know why actually. If I were to think why I guess it's coming back to a cultural thing from Singapore because we don't have enough land so there is no way you can bury yourself. It raises the question of whether I will die here or in Australia.

At this point I want to live in Australia for the rest of my life. The complexity again coming back to being an only child is I will go home when my parents need me. At least for now I foresee myself coming back – who knows – but either way, even if I was in Australia I don't see a point in burying my body if I'm dead anyway so just cremate. (Lucy, 40s, Indian-Chinese Singaporean, Christian)

Some Christians appreciate the idea and opportunity to have their remains spread on the garden of their church parish and memorialised in part of the church property. Such way of memorialisation can unexpectedly ensure perpetual maintenance and they do not need to worry about being deserted in a cemetery, as their children may be unlikely to visit the memorial plaque due to the problem of distance and other reasons.

No, we haven't really actually thought of a service, but Bill and I have a brick face on the memorial wall at St Thomas More and we've bought two bricks so there's room for two plaques to go on the bricks. And we will be cremated and then the ashes will go into the garden in front of that memorial wall, so we've thought that far through ... Yeah, because I don't think our children would be ever coming along putting flowers on our grave and we couldn't get a plot in the Mornington Cemetery, we'd have to go to Bunurong or wherever it is, it's not close handy. So we thought about it and decided we'd have a cremation. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Some indicated that they did not care what was done with the cremains but agreed to have the cremains interred in a cemetery so that the descendants had somewhere to go and remember the parents, for example on the Mother's Day.

I said to my family, my daughter particularly, that really you can cremate me and I don't care what you do with the ashes because to me the body when you're dead is dead, you're not there, so it doesn't matter what you do with the body. So I said, 'Cremate and do whatever you want with the ashes'. But she said, after we had gone to Springvale, 'I like the idea of coming to a place where I can talk to you'. Because she saw a sign when you drove past Springvale cemetery about Mother's Day and she said, 'Yes I think that is quite a nice idea.

On Mother's Day you can go back to your mother's grave and bring some flowers and talk to your mother' and I said, 'You do realise that you can talk to your mother anywhere you like if you feel like talking to a dead mother. I mean she's not God' but it didn't make sense to me. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

Why choose cremation?

It seems fair to say that the majority of the population do accept cremation as part of the culture.

For me personally, I think probably the tree pod, that's probably my favourite one. My husband definitely wants a tree pod and he absolutely wants his ashes as a cremation into a tree pod and that's it. It's a symbol of life goes on. (Alana, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Cremains not in the cemetery but elsewhere

Cremains left in the garage, wardrobe or bedroom

The cremation rate in Australia is steadily increasing, however study participants were still in search of meaningful ways to dispose of the cremains. This was especially the case if the deceased did not leave a particular request about what to do with the cremains.

Yes it's interesting that both my parents died in the last three years and their ashes are sitting in my brother's garage. And one of my cousins, his parents died two years before that, their ashes are still sitting in his ... we have a family plot outside of Adelaide where my great grandparents are buried and everybody is talking about placing the ashes in that, but nobody has done anything about it. I have given up asking and trying to ... just leave it. (Jackson, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

By keeping the ashes at home, some people felt close to the deceased and it seemed to be a continuation of mourning.

When I picked Frank's ashes up I could have left them there or I could have picked them up and I said, 'No I'd like him to come home' because he wanted to die here. So I brought his ashes home and I thought well where am I going to put them so I put them in his chair over there and somebody come in and I'd say, 'Oh just a minute I'll move Frank's ashes' and they'd go, 'Oh is that Frank? Hi Frank', and they'd talk to his ashes but it was all our neighbours that used to come and talk to him all the time. And I didn't tell my oldest son because he's a bit emotional and he suffers with emotional depression so anyway he said to me one day, 'When are we going to do dad's ashes mum?', and I said, 'Oh I've got them at home'. He goes, 'Where are they?' I said, 'Well when you're not there I put them in the chair but when you're there I put them in on the bed'. He goes, 'Mum! I'd like to hold them'. I said, 'Ok' so he came and he just sat and nursed them for a while. (Jennifer, 70s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

Cremains to make a 'fish bowl under the ocean'

In regard to the final site for the cremains to rest, it is becoming diverse and participants are still in search of their appropriate and meaningful place. In a popular trend in North America, cremains became part of a fish bowl to offer fish a home under the ocean as an aesthetic and meaningful option. It was a way to offer kindness and hospitality to other living beings such as fish.

No, it doesn't matter really. Favourite place, it would probably be something that Andrew and I would decide on. Something special but to Andrew and I. It would probably be the ocean. I mean I haven't thought about it so... (Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Others would like to offer their cremains as food for the fish under the ocean.

But I do like Queensland's idea of putting ashes under the water. It's only coming up recently so having gravesites under water, or like your ashes put under water in whatever they are ... [It's] a container of some sort, and they actually become things for the fish to go around. So it actually sounds like a pretty good idea. It's like sinking a boat, the boat becomes a place for all the fish to do things and barnacles and all of those sorts of things. I really like that idea. So your ashes become basically food, if you're going to sprinkle them on the water they become fish food anyway. I think I like that idea only because I just don't see people going to gravesites. Some nationalities do it; mine being that Anglo-Saxon type of stuff. I probably don't know many people that would do what I want. (Larissa, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

Ashes on the meaningful place or space

The cemetery was a meaningful and convenient place for some to have their cremains interred and this made a good memorial site for their descendants. For others, they wished to find a personally meaningful place and this site could change over time as they go through their particular junctures of life. If someone has migrated to another place and becomes well settled in the new place over a period of time, it can make a difference to preferences.

We have made, when we did our Will, we made, my husband and I, we had to make some stipulations and we both up to now said, we wanted to be cremated and then our ashes scattered in places that are special to both of us. So I've said a place back home in the UK and I don't know what my husband's ... I can't remember now ... But that was about maybe eight years ago perhaps even a bit longer ago, maybe 10 years that we did our will and since then obviously we've been in Australia longer ... Now we feel more settled and now I think it will be a bit of a pain for someone to have the hassle of taking your ashes overseas. Maybe, now I sort of think, maybe I wouldn't ... perhaps I would let them off that bit. (Alison, 40s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

The meaningful place could be a birthplace or related to the parents' professional background.

So my brother and my dad were both navy people so their ashes ... they were cremated and their ashes were scattered at sea, no graves. And my mum wanted her body to go to science, but that couldn't happen because she was too far out of Melbourne. And I wasn't the executor. (Larissa, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

It is often the case that the mourners would like to honour the wishes of the deceased in regard to what they would like done with their cremains.

Yeah. Because the thing is, it's really nice to have gravesites and you do respect people's wishes and what they want, but for me I don't need a grave because people just don't listen after a while. That's the way I think about it. So I feel like I've got the ocean for my brother and my dad if I really need to feel close to them, and my mother is under a rose bush at Fawkner Cemetery ... But I do like Queensland's idea of putting ashes under the water. It's only coming up recently so having gravesites under water, or like your ashes put under water in whatever they are. (Larissa, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

Some seem to be able to orchestrate the whole process of scattering the ashes in a meaningful place. The event in itself is somewhat ritualised and memorialised.

But for my mother, when we disposed of her ashes, we went out in a boat in the Straits of Johor, which is north of Singapore. My mother is from Malaysia we actually released the ashes in a point where Malaysian waters and Singaporean waters meet. So we did that for her and we just made up a ritual we had her ashes and in the end we just wrapped it in a silk scarf and my mother was famous for her polo mints, she used to carry polo mints in her handbag. So we put two polo mints in. And she was an avid gardener and she had spliced red and white hibiscus into one plant and we had those in the garden and people would go, 'Can I have this?' and they would take cuttings. So we put a hibiscus in it for her and when we went out, we dropped flowers and we released flowers into the water as a goodbye. So, my brother lowered the ashes wrapped into the sea, and then we just threw the flowers overboard and we had music on the boat, we just played her favourite classical music, and that was it. It was just the four of us and my daughter and my niece. And whoever was driving the boat. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

Others were still thinking about the best ways to memorialise, beyond a specific site for memorialisation.

No I feel quite strongly that for me it should be cremation and that the ashes should be scattered somewhere. I think some of the things you are interested in is demands on cemeteries and so on.

For example mum and dad were cremated they are in an urn at Springvale and that's a 25-year lease and I've talked to my brother and sister about getting those released and scattering their ashes somewhere. This is just my belief that you don't need to have something like that. A plaque in a cemetery to remember your parents. We have other ways of remembering, photographs in your home I think are probably a better way of remembering your parents than some memorial stone or whatever, but I know that some religious groups like very large memorials, physical memorials. (Stanley, 70s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Seeking alternative body disposal or funeral or memorialisation

An increasing number of people are looking for alternative funeral services and methods of body disposal or memorialisation, seeking environmentally friendly or personally aesthetic methods.

Yeah. But it's quite funny because I think two weekends ago my best friend came from Sydney and we were talking about, I think an episode of maybe *The Project* years ago that we saw where I think if a person was cremated the ashes and then they put the ashes, sort of, mixed together in with the soil and then grows a tree or something like that. (Ping, 40s, Malaysian Chinese, Christian)

Memorialisation

Memorialisation and its site as family matters

Family memorial site is desired [family's cemetery]

Respondents highlighted the significance of family as an important element that extends beyond the lived experience. The arrangement may differ, but they would like to be together now and forever. This seems to be the case across different cultures.

I think, especially for Islanders where your family is, that's where home is. We have that kind of mentality. So I think wherever their family is where they think that a lot of them are going to be, that's where they want ... so it's not really the country itself. It's where your family is. It's very family orientated. (Talia, 18, Samoan New Zealander, Christian)

As time moves, the number of family members increase over many generations. As people move and current generations do not always remember past ones, a new family memorial site is developed.

That would be my family and that's my children. My parents, if I died – my parents are both still alive – they both live in western Australia and their immediate family are all buried in Albany, the Albany Cemetery and so if they had anything to do with it, if they were planning it, I think they would want to have me buried in western Australia because that's their world there.

But they're not likely to have anything to do with that, it would be my children who would be ... or my spouse, my wife, who would be planning my funeral if I was to die suddenly.
(Johnny, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Memorial site is planned for my family

Some families would like to reserve the plots in a cemetery and others who are able to afford even a designated area for the members of an extended family.

I've discussed my wishes, my family all know that I have the cemetery plot next to my grandparents and my sister, so they are aware of that. In terms of actually the service thing I haven't really discussed that at any length. (Alfred, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Christian participants seem generally relaxed about funeral rites and memorialisation rather than feeling the need to follow past traditions in any rigid manner. Also, immigrants' integration into the Australian culture seemed to indicate that they comfortably accepted the 'Australian' ways of funeral rites and memorialisation.

Pre-purchasing the memorial/burial site

Data analysis indicates that pre-purchasing the plot for burial or memorialisation followed by cremation is a 'common' practice for a small proportion of the Australian population. This seems the case especially for those who are able to afford it. In some other cultures, purchasing a plot ahead of time seems to be more common than other cultures. Also, there are people who are not aware of this possibility.

So you know, as we come in my super actually paid for it. We just felt it would be a good time to ... we don't know what's around the corner, so it's good to get something done in that regard. (Kate, 60s, Polish, Catholic)

Some participants think it is only natural for mortal humans to have a plot ready for the end of their life. One may pay it as lump sum or by lay-by.

We all know it costs for a funeral. You've got to be dumb not to know that but you know my advice to anybody is if you've got the money prepay it all, if not, have a funeral plan and pay it off. Not everybody can afford to pay it out front.

But we were just both retired and I'd sold my business and my husband retired so we had the money therefore before we'd done anything else that's what we done. Then we invested our money. (Jennifer, 70s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

Having a plot ready seems more urgent to those suffering from a terminal disease.

No, I never really thought of that and asking if they're going to pre-purchase a plot. But one of my good friends, she thinks she may have cancer, I think they have already some place to arrange. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

It is unclear whether pre-purchasing a plot has become less common in recent years due to mobility.

Catholics

Diversity among individuals even within a Christian tradition like Catholicism

As noted earlier, a Christian upbringing has significant influence on the funeral traditions including memorialisation. However, in the era of secularism and pluralism, there seems to be an increasing diversity on the perspectives of funeral and memorialisation within a particular Christian denomination. This change could be in part because, the boundaries between Christian denominations may have become blurred. Moreover, and for example, one may even maintain both secular and religious perspectives on this, which refers to a degree of secularisation within the Christian community.

So I think then people know what that person's wishes were. Like we've all got different things that we might want, like some people might want to be cremated and some people don't, because they want the coffin there. And people's spirituality too. Even though we're a Baptist Church, not all the people in our church are Baptists, and they come from different backgrounds. (Rhonda, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Organ donation

A small number (n=3) of participants mentioned their desire of organ donation. The reason is simply their wish to be helpful to others in the best possible way. If this is desired, they need to take extra steps informing their next of kin or relatives.

... even before I think the cancer diagnosis, one of my mentors, who was also my boss and my dad's friend when he passed away suddenly due to organ failure, it made me, sort of, think about organ donation. And so I signed up for that and I encouraged my sister to do that and then I made sure that she knew that that was one of my last wish. Because I said that if for whatever reason sometimes records are not updated and they said that the family members still has, I think, ability to the next kin to hold back. And I said, "I don't want you to hold back on that decision". (Ping, 40s, Malaysian Chinese, Christian)

Decision Making

- Preparing a will is quite common although a regular renewal seems to be an issue. Allocating the power of attorney is a culture, not wishing to burden the family or friends.
- Integration into the Australian society led to the adoption of the 'Australian' funeral. Migrants tend to maintain their past home's cultural elements. Some still wish to be buried or memorialised in their past home country.
- Pre-planning is becoming relatively common and considered practical and meaningful. Pre-paid funeral service insurance is becoming more common. An incentive is to have their own desires implemented and unload the burden for children.
- A funeral is to reflect on the value of the deceased and the family. It is about celebrating a good life. Perceptions of funerals are influenced by the media rather than religion.
- Participants were relaxed about how the funeral is conducted. They were often unsure about what kinds of funeral they wanted.

Preparing a will

It is critical to have a will organised

The importance of organising a will as well as the power of attorney irrespective of one's age was well understood by the majority of the Australian population. When it relates to the end-of-life, there was no question about the importance. However, a regular renewal seemed to be an issue to a good portion of the population mainly due to the relatively high cost involved.

Yes, we knew the necessity of getting a will done, so my brother-in-law is a lawyer and he was able to help us with that. We each had a will and power of attorney, yes that's all fixed up. We haven't made any links to funeral parlours yet in terms of insurance, that will come. We don't see any great necessity to rush into that at the moment. (Kate, 60s, Polish, Catholic)

It can be important to have the wills shared among family members.

I haven't had a lot of closeness with my family for many years so I've actually got it all in the hands of a solicitor. So she's got my power of attorney, my medical power of attorney, my financial. But I do need to actually change that again so ... (Larissa, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

Participants were aware that not having a will organised can be adverse.

It's all very messy, the government takes ... you don't want the government to sticking its nose into your business. Really. Before, that at all costs, don't attract the interest of the tax man (laughs). Don't attract their [attention], for any reason. Of course if you got a lot of money, they take more than ... for me I've got nothing to worry about. (Jack, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Will on palliative and medical care

Participants indicated that it was important for wills to stipulate resuscitation wishes, as this makes the end-of-life process less stressful for the family.

Yes you can get a medical Power of Attorney to refuse resuscitation, and I've got it too. [My children] know. And they've got it too. (Jennifer, 70s, Anglo-Australian, Anglican)

Those with professional experience in the areas of palliative care seemed meticulously organised and encourage others to prepare their funeral in a similar fashion.

I personally have a funeral file in my house but I also have done advanced care planning also. I think possibly the personal one [came first] and if we go to a funeral we collect the order of service so that we have a source of information about orders of service. I'm a volunteer in Monash Medical and I work with the girls, there's a team there for advanced care directive ... When I visit patients in the hospital I actually hand out advanced care planning information. I just say, it can be confronting of course, some people might say do you think I'm about to go but it's all about preparation. (Frank, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Advanced care directives seemed a relatively recent matter in terms of the patients' active involvement and this could be an area for more publicity.

No, well I joined the centre 21 years ago so there was actually very little conversation about really advanced care directives at that point in time. So no it's something probably in the last five or six years we've only done. (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Cultural heritage affects the decision making/wish more than religious upbringing

Integration into the Australian society leads to 'Australian' style funeral

As noted earlier, those who have been in Australia for a long period and who have integrated into the Australian society tend to seek the funeral style that is prevalent in Australia. Other relevant factors that come into feature included the cost of funeral, and also what the rest of the family members thought about undertaking the funeral in Australia or in the past home country, for example, especially in cases where the families lived in other countries.

I guess there is always a way [to go back to Tonga], but it would be more, cost more I guess. I guess if the family can't really afford it, then they would probably send me back to Tonga. Which I don't want to because I am Australian born and I'm proud to be buried here, but unfortunately I can't be buried in the way I should be buried I guess. (Tony, 30s, Tongan, Christian)

However, a more 'Australian' style of funeral is prevalent in Australia and there were not always clearly distinct 'ethnic' styles of funeral services available. Thus, migrants tended to settle for what was easily available or given.

Just really more the cultural, I would make it a Christian cultural funeral instead, and they're all much of a muchness, held in a church, generally the prayers etcetera seem to be the same and the hymns. But I have attended quite a few funerals in the actual funeral directors' parlour, that seems to be more prominent these days than usual. I attended a funeral recently for a Malaysian gentleman. He was basically Buddhist but he still just had what I would consider a very western funeral. (Doris, 70s, Irish, Catholic)

Migrants maintain the funeral cultures from their past home countries

While migrants seemed to rapidly adopt the common funeral traditions in Australia, as noted, there were some people who remained past-home-oriented and would like to 'experience' their own past cultures.

I have already told my parents and my siblings that I don't want to be buried, six feet under or three feet under. I have always wanted to be buried in Tongan tradition. Because I've been to Tonga and I've experienced it and seen it. So we have the full tradition of being wrapped up in Tongan Tapa. It's a type of cloth. It's a type of material that they use to cover you up in. We are not supposed to be buried with ... it has to be 100% cotton. No buttons, no jewellery, nothing metal that's supposed to be around us. Which is what I've experienced first hand in Tonga with their funerals. Also the experience of digging my great-great grandmother, which my grandmother was going to be buried with her. And we collected her bones and stuff and we've seen how she was wrapped up and stuff. We just dug up the sand ... it was just her bones that were there in perfect condition. And it's been there for pretty much over a century. (Tony, 30s, Tongan, Christian)

A migrant might feel that she is following through her past home culture, but in reality it may not differ much from what we may call 'Australian' style funeral.

Yes in fact now that you mention, and links migration to end-of-life, I mean I do very much what we would have done in Singapore, which is, because we are Christian you would have some kind of service. Because I am Singaporean I am open to the idea of a cremation as opposed to a burial because unless you are Muslim in Singapore you generally get cremated because there is no space. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

Many churches in multicultural Australia are likely to be accommodating the needs of their church members who were born overseas, especially in terms of memorial service, to which the friends and relatives may contribute.

So we've got Catholic, Anglican, we've got Islanders in our church. And when people die, they often go back to their traditional things that they want. You know like if they were a Maori or something like that, and they might be generations ago, they seem to go back and they want those things. (Rhonda, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Some migrants seem to find the idea of cremation still too foreign to them.

Yeah. I think she had the idea for I think, after the funeral. A lot of our families wouldn't ... we didn't accept it kind of ... a lot of them didn't actually agree with what she wanted. We preferred to have him you know buried. When you look at it, it's like a big oven and it's ... just ... it's just I think for our family we just preferred, we wanted him to be buried, (Talia, 18, Samoan New Zealander, Christian)

A Filipino migrant found herself seeking to maintain her past home cultures in a strong way as she lives far from 'home'.

So in a way, going back to what I said earlier, if you're away from your home country, you become more further and you strive to keep that identity and preserve that identity and hopefully spread it and share it. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

Planning funeral

Pre-planning a funeral is good and desirable

Pre-planning one's funeral seems to be increasingly common, and it is considered practical and meaningful. Pre-planning involves consulting the family members and individual wishes can be better accommodated and this makes it much more meaningful to the mourners and the acquaintances. Further it makes it easier for children to carry out the funeral service.

In some ways yes. I mean, probably not totally final, but yes you do. And actually doing things that even now, you sort of think whenever my time comes, it's going to be so much easier for the boys because there will already been things in place. Not like having to start from really square one. Yes there are certain things that you sort of think, yes that's what I will do, that's where I will be. That's what we think and do the thing ... my father-in-law, passed away a couple of ago, three months. (Jane, 60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian)

General perception of funerals

The funeral is an occasion for the family and community, reflecting their value

Funeral services generally take place among people with a close network, such as family, acquaintances and the community.

That's what I'm saying ... funerals call families. So even though I may not know you, but you are still family, I'll still come. But not even knowing that I know the family. Just being present kind of. It was my dad's first cousin [who passed away], but I never knew who she was. (Tony, 30s, Tongan, Christian)

The funeral is about celebrating a life

The most frequently mentioned aspect about the funeral/memorial service is that it is about celebrating the life of the deceased. Humans seem to put so much value on the ritual of funeral and this is a way to express their respect for their loved ones. They need to be farewelled with dignity and honour. The funeral may not need to be elaborate, but the mourners would like it to be decent.

I think the ritual is really important. Not so much what you do with the body, the person has gone, the spirit has gone out of the vessel, but Andrew and I think alike even the honouring of someone's life, and giving opportunity for anyone who has, if I was planning for Andrew for example, to give opportunity for anyone who wanted to honour him in any way shape or form to be part of a ritual of some sort. I think it's very important. That's the most important part. (Claire, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

While the funeral is often designed to remember and honour the deceased, the mourners would like to offer the best possible milieu so that the guests can freely mingle. Indeed, the occasion seems to refresh and rebuild the relationships among the living. Perhaps a celebratory setting among the guests may correspond with the way the life of the deceased is celebrated.

I think what I would want, is I would want everybody to feel comfortable who came. So I wouldn't want anyone to feel that they shouldn't be there or want anyone to feel that they weren't wearing the right thing. I just want everyone to feel very comfortable.

To express whatever ... I don't want people to feel uptight about the whole thing. And at the end of the day, once you've gone, you're gone aren't you. So I wouldn't ... I would want people to be a little bit upset ... but I wouldn't want people to be ... you know ... people have to move on don't they. (Alison, 40s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

When a church community organises the farewell, the funeral and the wake seem to be an extension of the regular service and morning tea where parishioners would gather when the deceased was alive. There was evidence of closeness among the guests.

No, I would call it a celebration of life. I like it when we all get a laugh somewhere along the line at a funeral. And we often at the church, we often have an afternoon tea or a morning tea or something after the service and the ladies in the Church rally around – this is the Catholic Church – rally around and make morning or afternoon tea. And people come down and there's cousins and friends who haven't seen each other for years and they're all greeting each other and talking about, "Do you remember when?" And they really enjoyed getting together, not just the person who's died, but all the people that knew them. They like to get together too and express their sadness and their grief and the fun they had with the person who's just died, get together and talk about that. And that's very important too. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Again the church community seems to have shared values as Christians.

It's for the people that are here and it's a celebration. We don't call them funerals at our church. We always call them thanksgiving services, because it's giving thanks for that person. And for us and for the people that we do it, it's really for the family. I mean a person has passed away, and if they're a Christian, and they know where they've gone. That's from a Christian point of view. But it's really for the family to say goodbye. And I think that gives finality to ... this is the end now. And they can, as I said, wish that person well in that whatever they believe, whether it's an afterlife or whether it is belief in Christianity, where they're going. And I think it's giving that person hope too. And being with other people and being encouraged and supported, and other people know who you're feeling and just that encouragement. (Rhonda, 60s, Anglo-Australian, Baptist)

Not demanding a religious funeral but 'easy-going'

Conventionally, Christians have preferred a religious service for the funeral with some Christian ritual elements. However, contemporary Christians seem relaxed about the nature of the service in terms of the degree of its religiosity. Some Christians seem completely unsure about their own funeral service. Others feel it is not necessary to hold a religious service.

Not in a formal rigid kind of way. There's also different denominations of Christianity and I'm more on the liberating ones where it's not solemn and it's not by the book kind of thing. So it wouldn't be a two-hour mass, at the most an hour and then that's it. Everybody please go eat and drink. (Lucy, 40s, Indian-Chinese Singaporean, Christian)

It's flexible, but our experience is we actually attend the church in Melbourne in the city. Many people we know who have died have had their funerals mostly not in the church but at the funeral parlour. (Frank, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Details of the planning are left with children

Most older interviewees indicated that funeral planning was important to them. In particular they wanted to spare their family the stress and financial burden of organising the funeral at a time of mourning. However, detailed procedures were left unplanned and unstipulated. Those without a plan in place were aware of the difficulties in arranging a funeral at the time of passing.

Yes. Well we haven't really discussed it as such because my children think I'm going to live forever, they don't wish ... if I say, "When I die" or something they just shrug their shoulders as though they think that I'm not going to die. But that's the way they think when they're young but, yes. No, it really depends on how they want to proceed at the time because as you get older, and maybe I'll get dementia or something, you don't know. So I sort of figure, like certainly I've left instructions but that's only financial, it's got nothing to do with ... well it's not even financial, all it is, is to keep them apprised of what the financial situation is so they know where the bank accounts and everything is. (Doris, 70s, Irish, Catholic)

Children or the mourners tend to bear in mind what the deceased wanted and carry out the funeral as desired. Participants noted that in some cases the mourners or children of the deceased go against what the deceased requested about her/his own funeral. When this happens there is much anxiety among the relatives and acquaintances.

Values: Changes to the Broader Culture

- Individuals' important values are reflected on their funeral rites.
- Secularisation and the change of Christian traditions/cultures. Many remain Christian without going to a church, or with less attachment to the church.
- Environmental awareness: Environmentally green methods are increasingly pursued, such as cardboard coffins. Many are aware of limited land space.

Individuals' important values are reflected in their funeral rites

From rigid to flexible

Changes in individuals' values have influenced Christians' approach to funeral rites and the funeral service – both for them and their loved ones. Perceptions of what churchgoers, or Christians in general, wanted in the past and thought desirable and dignifying have continued to evolve.

This can be understood as reflecting the changes happening in the broader community. Participants seem to have moved from rigid to flexible types of services, in terms of what they want. We do not suggest that the participants had not previously sought meaningful funeral rites, but rather that they now seek different formats, reflecting what is on offer socially, economically, culturally and technologically.

What is meaningful and valuable clearly varies from one person to another. Participants acknowledge that when they are farewelled they will not be present and therefore what happens at their funeral matters little. Nonetheless, they want their own funeral to be meaningful, well-presented and memorable. That is, it should reflect the way they want to be remembered.

And it was all like ... ooooo funerals are solemn, very solemn affairs, you know. You don't do anything to make people laugh or celebrate somebody's life ... you didn't do that. It's very different. And I think it should be. In my mind, it doesn't need to be ... there's enough sadness in the fact that someone's gone ... look at the bright side of things of what they did in life or something. And I think there's other little things about things that happen on that day that I did, because I wanted to. Nobody said you should, or shouldn't. (Jane, 60s, Anglo-Saxon, Christian)

Dillon's answer to the question about the change of funeral culture is nuanced:

I think it's a really good question but I think the answer is more complex than a shift away from religious connection leads to a reduction in the use of say ritual in burial or cremation. (Dillon, 50s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Secularisation and the change of Christian traditions/cultures

A significant number of Christians seem to remain committed to their faith despite not being regular churchgoers. Nevertheless, this does not make them any less religious. Contemporary Christians differ from previous generations in the sense that they tend to form their own views with relatively limited input from others, for example, the clergy.

No, I wouldn't have really discussed it with them, particularly among my Catholic friends because some of them are more religious than others.

Some people have kept the faith quite well and consistently through their life, whereas I would probably say even though I state that I'm Catholic, I don't go to church every week, but I do follow the Catholic teachings. Whether I agree with them is a moot point, yes.
(Doris, 70s, Irish, Catholic)

Non-churchgoing Christians seem respectful of what fellow Christians do and believe.

Yeah, I don't consider myself religious but I do consider myself very spiritual. It's a funny one. Like it's not important for me to ... you know they say that a funeral is for the living and not for the dead, right? But it wouldn't be important for me to have a church or a Catholic service. But perhaps for my extended family, that might be important to them ... Yeah, I was raised as Christian Catholic. Then I studied Buddhism. And then now I'm interested in nature. And I still remain interested in Buddhism and some parts of Christianity and I'm interested in a lot of different ways of looking at the world. (David, 40s, Filipino, Catholic)

Environmentally green is desired

One of the most significant messages emerging from the interviews was the participants' high degree of environmental awareness. Many discussed their wish to protect the environment for future generations and were prepared to do what they could. In other cultures, they seem to have developed their own methods of coping with the specific environmental context.

You can do it as many times as you ... it goes on to like... My elders said that you can have hundreds of family members in just that one tomb. Cos in Tonga, cemeteries are limited.
(Tony, 30s, Tongan, Christian)

I don't think it's a Catholic tradition, they traditionally are always buried but they're coming around to the thinking of why take up this space when you can just be ashes. I mean you're nothing after you've been buried. It's just the traditional thinking is changing; it's just a changing aspect. (Audrey, 80s, Anglo-Australian, Christian)

Concluding Remarks

Christian funeral rites and memorialisation have been undergoing significant change. They are in transition from the religious to more flexible and alternative methods of burial and memorialisation. Participants were increasingly more readily accepting of the need to openly discuss the topic of death. However, there was still a large proportion of people who were reluctant to discuss the topic, owing in part to a strong underlying culture to deny human mortality.

The role of the cemetery remains a significant element both in our passage through life and as a memorial site for our descendants. The choice of a cemetery is closely related to the existence of past friends, acquaintances and families, and the meanings attached to the site. Data analysis shows that an increasing number of people are taking a serious interest in genealogy.

Participants considered attending funeral services as important and meaningful as they held more value than some other celebratory occasions, such as weddings. Attending funerals gave participants an insight into the rites and services and what they would face for their family or for themselves. Participants were divided as to whether or not there was enough information about funerals. However, those who diligently looked for the information tended to think there was enough available.

The role of the church remains significant for Christian funerals and memorialisation. Christians generally prefer a religious funeral ceremony and see the church as having an important and comforting role, especially for the funeral service. In this process, the priest takes the key role. Memorialisation etched on a brick, or in a garden, at low cost within the church property was greatly appreciated.

Full-body burial rather than cremation was a preferred option for a good proportion of the Christian participants, although a significant number indicated that they, or their acquaintances, will choose cremation over burial. The trend of shifting from burial to cremation is apparent. The option of cremation seems more prevalent in the individualistic context of the Australian society whereas burial was more commonly chosen as a collective choice in the traditional Australia. Cremation, and subsequent memorialisation, was perceived as taking less space as well as being environmentally friendly and sustainable, thus better preserving the environment for future generations.

A notable number of participants see the cemetery as one option to memorialise but also look for alternative sites, for example, in the garage, living room, river or ocean. Pre-purchasing the plot for burial or columbarium was becoming common for a small proportion of participants. Some participants were not informed of this at all.

Preparing a will, as well as allocating power of attorney, were now thought to be the common practices in Australia. These were seen as ways of alleviating any burden left on family or friends. Pre-planning a funeral is understood and thought to be a good and desirable practice. While the broad dimensions of the funeral, such as joining a funeral insurance scheme are commonly practised, the details of the funeral are often left with the family.

Those migrants who are well integrated into the Australian culture tend to follow the mainstream 'Australian' funeral traditions, but they tend to incorporate some traditions from their past home country.

The kinds of funeral rites one may practice, closely reflect the values of the deceased and their family members. Funeral services and memorialisation for Christians are going through changes and those changes reflect secularisation and individualist cultures. Christian now seem much less rigid and they look for diverse alternatives. Participants are environmentally conscious and this is directly reflected on the funeral services and memorialisation.

Recommendations

1. Ascertain and provide the needs of those who are increasingly interested in genealogy and relevant facilities in the cemetery.
2. Continue to improve the cemetery environment as a park for the public to reflect, rest and have leisure.
3. Increase public awareness of what the funeral entails and how it can be prepared.
4. The general decrease in full-body burial, increase in cremation and the public desire for alternative body disposal and memorialisation needs to be considered in planning the cemetery spaces.
5. Consider the possibility of diverse and alternative memorialisation.
6. Increase public awareness of the advanced care directive.
7. Enhance public awareness of environmentally friendly approaches to funerals and memorialisation.

7. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Group

Introduction

This section focuses on the 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse' (CALD) group. Of the total study participants, 31 (37.8%) identified as belonging to this category. Unlike the other two categories, Baby Boomers and people with Christian faith, the CALD group is not a social category but an analytic category that consists of individuals who come from non-Anglo and non-English speaking cultural backgrounds. The 31 participants who belong to the CALD group come from a diverse cultural and ethnic background: Jewish, Greek, Chinese ¹⁰, Indian ¹¹, Sri Lankan, Pacific-Islander, New Zealander/Maori, Filipino, Indonesian, Dutch, South African, Macedonian, German, and mixed European heritages (i.e. Polish and Dutch). The diversity observed here is set against the broader context of cultural and social diversity in Australia. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) defines the CALD community as consisting of people 'who were born overseas, have a parent born overseas or speak a variety of languages'. According to the latest census conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2017), 10.6 million (45%) Australians were either both overseas (26% or 6.2 million) or had one or both parents who were born overseas (19% or 4.5 million). There are more than 300 languages spoken in Australia, which means one in five people speak a non-English language at home and English is not the first language for around 15% (3.5 million) of the Australian population (ABS, 2017).

Overall, it seems like the members of the CALD group are adaptable to the Australian way of life while continuing to maintain their cultural identity and some traditional core values. This cross/inter-cultural knowledge is well displayed through the study's participants' ability to observe and develop the awareness of the different funeral rites and memorialisation between Australia and their respective culture of origin. Despite the differences, we observe no obvious conflict or contention between members of the CALD group and the mainstream Australian society when it comes to the end-of-life (EoL) matters. The relative inter-cultural harmony could be partly attributed to Australia's multicultural policy, which celebrates the ethnic and cultural diversity.

¹⁰ The Chinese cultural heritage includes individuals come from the PRC and Chinese diaspora (such as Malaysia and Singapore);

¹¹ The Indian cultural heritage includes individuals come from India and the Indian diaspora (such as Singapore).

Consequently, members of the CALD group, in general, are able to fulfil both the social expectations of Australia and the cultural needs of their respective community in terms of funeral rites and memorialisation.

Of the 31 belonging to the CALD category, 19 were female and 12 were male. The gender ratio was 1.6 to 1, which is a much closer figure than the ratio of the other two categories: the gender ratio was 3.2 to 1 for the Baby Boomers and 2.3 to 1 for the Christians. The reason could be that in some communities, such as Jewish and Muslim, men have the exclusive responsibility to oversee the EoL related arrangements. Nonetheless, just like other categories, more women participated in the interview than men in the CALD category. Jenny (60s, Malaysian Chinese, Buddhism), who affiliates with the local Buddhist community in Melbourne, provided a very telling account: her husband still refuses to accompany her to the cemetery for work, which provides religious and spiritual counselling service to deceased's families.

There are some overlaps with the other two categories: 9 individuals identified themselves as Christians, and 19 individuals belonged to the Baby Boomers category due to their age. The age divide of participants in the CALD category is as follows:

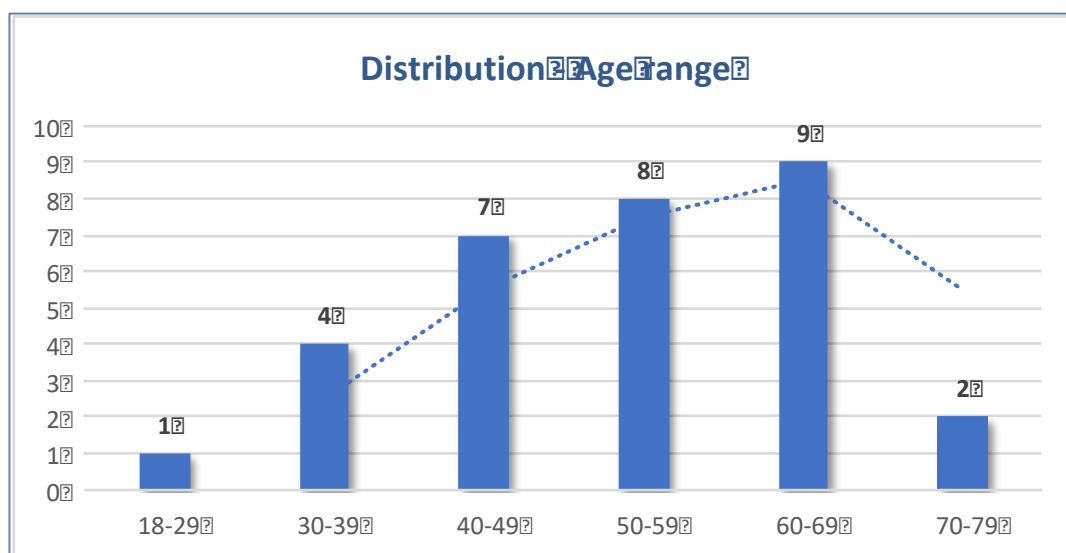


Figure 1

More than half of the participants are 50 years of age or above (see Figure 1), which is consistent with the overall data and the age distributions of the other two categories. However, there are more participants born outside of Australia in this category (see figure 2, which follows).

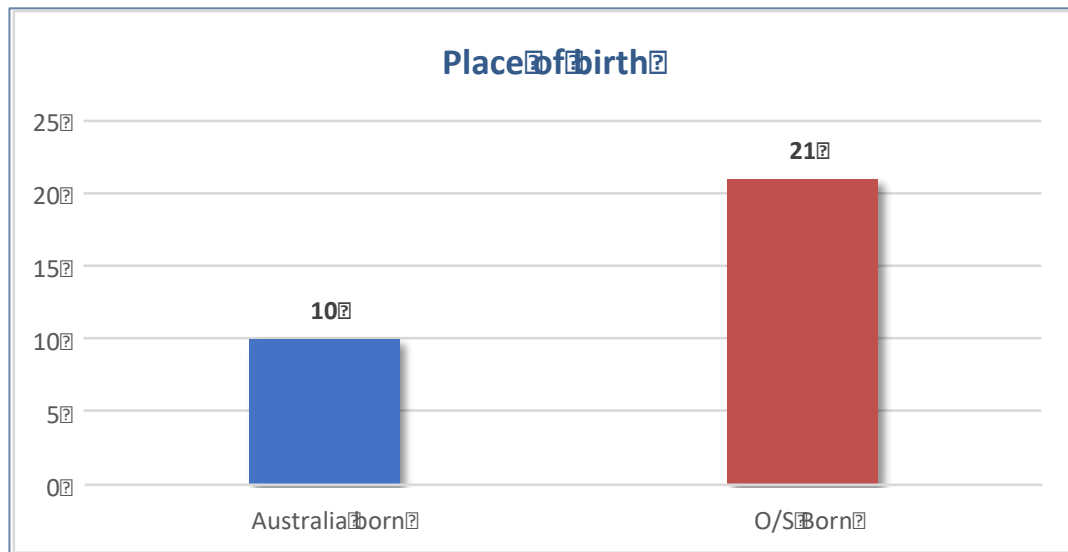


Figure 2

Figure 2. The ratio here indicates that most of our participants in the CALD category are first-generation migrants to Australia.

In order to facilitate the discussions and analysis of this section, and other sections to come, a better understanding of the CALD category is needed. There are two overarching types of CALD community identified in the present study: the ‘more-structured’ CALD community and the ‘less-structured’ CALD community. The Muslim, Jewish, and the Orthodox Greek communities represented the former, and the latter type had CALD communities like the Chinese, Indian, New Zealander, and Pacific Islanders. ‘Structured’ in this instance means individuals of the CALD community were strictly following and adhering to their traditional practices and rituals when it came to EoL matters.

The ‘structure’ is embodied by the presence of one or more dominant cultural institutions in the community – such as the mosque for the Muslim community and the Chevra Kadisha for the Jewish community, *in Australia*. The less-structured communities, however, do not necessarily have such a dominant cultural institution. The Chinese community, for instance, lacks a dominant cultural institution that guides people’s everyday lives *in Australia*. Nonetheless, individuals from less-structured communities tend to make individualised choices when it comes to the EoL decision making – while some will go back to the orthodox traditions of funeral and memorialisation rituals, others have a more individualised and culturally hybridised approach.

The emphasis of 'Australia' here means to clarify the meaning of 'community structure', which is not a reference to the overall structure of that culture. For example, the Chinese culture could be highly structured when it comes to rituals and rites, but there is no such a central institution or authority in Australia to maintain it. Hence, the level of structure used here is a relative term rather than a general one.

Awareness of cemeteries

Overall, research participants from the CALD category had a stronger need for, and hence awareness of cemeteries. People of the CALD category generally have some previous experience with cemeteries, both within and outside of Australia. Migrants, in particular, had a stronger impression about cemeteries in Australia because they tended to compare with those they encountered and remembered back in their home countries.

- Cemeteries remained important to most participants of the CALD category, regardless of the person's religious and ethnic cultural background, as well as their preference for cremation or full-body burial.
- Migrants tended to rely on their previous experience with cemeteries in their respective 'home country' to make sense of the Australian cemeteries. Importantly, the comparison generally would lead to the decision about where one wished to be laid to rest.
- Cemeteries were perceived as providing a sense of 'settlement' for many CALD participants.
- Migrants also learnt to navigate the Australian culture and ways of life via their interactions with cemeteries in Australia.

Participants in the CALD category generally believed that having a physical site was vital to them, emotionally and culturally, to conduct their memorialisation and mourning. Experience with cemeteries varied but many participants indicated that their awareness of Australian cemeteries came from their previous experience with cemeteries outside of Australia. Most importantly, their previous perception would determine their imagination of the Australian cemeteries and, funeral rites and memorialisation in general.

Jenny (60s, Malaysian Chinese, Buddhism) reflected on why her husband still refuses to go to the cemetery in Australia even though she sometimes visits the cemetery for work-related purposes:

Back in Malaysia now, we don't go to the cemetery except for one during the year, which is during the Chinese Qing Ming. Its around April the 5th, 10 days and 10 days before that. Because in Malaysia, the cemeteries are not like this. The Chinese cemeteries are not ... they are all overgrown, for one year they allow all the grass and everything to grow and 10 days before April 5th they will have a big burn off so you expose the graves again. And we were taught that graves are places where the gangsters will hide out, the thieves will hide out, people will come and rob you, so we don't go. Even like now when my brother ... when go back to pray during that month ... 10 days, he will make sure that he will go at a time when there is a lot of people. Otherwise he will get robbed. (Jenny, 60s, Malaysian Chinese, Buddhism)

For many migrants, especially those coming from Asian countries where the option of burial is scarce due to limited land space, Australian cemeteries are generally more pleasing, less crowded, more personalised, and less morbid. These perceptions relate to the fact that many cemeteries in Asia are located far away from every-day, 'living' spaces in the city. Cemeteries in Asia were always perceived as outside of people's lives and daily routines, hence, segregated, cold (non-lively), and detached from the social culture. By contrast, many local cemeteries in Melbourne were built next to, or even within residential areas, which was very unusual to participants with Asian backgrounds. Lucy (40s, Indian-Chinese Singaporean, Christian) had some experience with her apartment hunt:

I thought that's really interesting because at that point I was actually house hunting. So the apartment was here, there was a road that separated my apartment block. So I was probably 10 minutes from the cemetery, and I'll tell you what my parents said when they visited me. This was in Melbourne in St Kilda East, so I still at the end of the day decided to take the apartment because I loved the apartment even though it was near the cemetery, so I guess that says it didn't really bother me. I did drive around, and I did notice it but I went, "It's fine". But it was funny because when my parents came, they did make a comment and they said, "Why did you choose a place near the cemetery?" So that's where some of their cultural differences are because I have grown up a lot here, so I am quite more open minded these days, but after a while it didn't really bother my parents because it didn't matter. It didn't really bother me it's just something I noticed. Thought it was interesting and then I went, "Whatever". (Lucy, 40s, Indian-Chinese Singaporean, Christian)

The acceptance of cemetery as an integral social life seemed to serve as a process of cultural reflection and navigation, which also helped migrants to adjust to the Australian way of life. Observing Australian cemeteries on the other hand, also allowed some to navigate and appreciate Australian culture and values. Ping (40s, Malaysian Chinese, Christian), for example, was surprised by the cultural hybridity in Australian cemetery:

Yeah, I was very surprised. I was surprised that, how should I say, they put them all in the same area, even though they're segregated. Because in Malaysia it won't be that way, like if it's a Muslim cemetery you only have people who are Muslims in there and you have to go somewhere else for the non-Muslim, say the Chinese group. And that's why I think non-Muslim graves they are different and then if you are I think some of the Catholic Churches, because they have very large church buildings, so they have the... I think just like in Hong Kong, those little walls and then you cremate and then you put it in there. (Ping, 40s, Malaysian Chinese, Christian)

It was the appreciation of Australian cemeteries, which was often formed through one's comparison with their experience with cemeteries outside of Australia, forged their awareness of the Australian cemeteries. Not everyone preferred the Australian 'style'. Tony (30s, Tongan, Christian) found cemeteries in Australia quite 'plain' compared to those in Tonga. Tony described Tongan cemeteries as follows:

It's pretty much built like in tombs ... and they decorate it with colourful like nets and stuff like that and they do it every single year. They cover the tombs with ... what's it called, sand like beach sand and they decorate it with flowers and stuff. It's amazing ... I feel like a cemetery is like a happy place. (Tony, 30s, Tongan, Christian)

In addition to the aesthetic appeal, burying in Australia also presents a logistic challenge that contradicts with Tongan value of family:

(It) is the problem we have now with the family that's buried here, because they were buried in different parts, and they are also buried in different cemeteries and one of the other cemeteries is not available anymore, because there is no more space. Whereas if we had the Tongan way of burial we'd all be in that one place. Moreover, everyone would know that's where we are going. We wouldn't have to worry about, ok we are going to have to purchase another piece, block ... for that new deceased or (so on). (Tony, 30s, Tongan, Christian)

Despite the different views, it was quite clear that most members of the CALD community perceive the cemetery, both within and outside of Australia, as an important ritual space that allows them to conduct memorialisation and mourning.

This sentiment is especially evident amongst those individuals from the more-structured communities. Interview participants who self-identified as Jewish, for example, are aware of the Jewish cemetery near the Springvale Cemetery and hence, were confident that they would be buried there themselves. All interview participants in the CALD category were well aware of the availability of the ethnic/religion-specific sections in major cemeteries in Melbourne, and hence, none expressed concern or confusion of the perspective of dying in Australia from a cultural and religious perspective.

Access to information

Participants were asked if they had enough information about funeral rites, memorialisation and mourning available to them, and where they had been sourcing information from when they need to make EoL-related decisions in Australia. On this aspect, the structure of the community became crucial in determining one's experience. It was found that participants who belonged to those more-structured CALD communities, like Jews and Muslims, had no such issues with obtaining information before, or when, death occurred in a family. However, participants who belonged the less-structured CALD communities, like New Zealanders, Chinese, and Indians for example, had a more diverse and fragmented experience. Those who were better informed either 1. had experience with arranging funerals and burial in Australia; 2. they or members of their families had health conditions that triggered them to seek out for the relevant information; or, 3. their jobs provided opportunities to obtain information.

Don (50s), who was a Jewish leader, indicated that mainstream institutions such as hospitals, cemeteries and local councils were very familiar with the Jewish way of mourning, burial and memorialisation. Likewise, Aabis (50s, Indonesian), a community leader amongst the Indonesian Muslim community in Melbourne, also expressed his confidence that their religious rituals and memorialisation needs can be met in Australia because the relevant stakeholders were familiar with their customs. According to Aabis, mainstream service providers such as the cemetery and funeral directors have the relevant cultural expert to liaise with their community.

We note that Don (Jewish), Aabis (Indonesian Muslim) and James (Greek Orthodox – who will be introduced later) all performed the cultural role as ‘mentor/advisor’ on the topic of death and memorialisation in their respective communities. These individuals and their respective community institution act as the central figure to disseminate, process and interpret the meaning and message about death and memorialisation to their respective communities.

Each of these faith leaders played a crucial role in providing information and facilitating the traditional ritual practice of their respective cultural belief. Henceforth, each of them was regarded as the authoritative voice in their community. Indeed, Aabis, for example, was referred to us through Ibrahim (40s, Indonesian, Muslim), who made several mentions of Aabis’ role in the community throughout and after the interview. Importantly, Aabis did not work in the funeral and cemetery sector – his full-time job was a university academic (in the discipline of medicine and health). In other words, our experience of developing contact with Aabis also illustrates the centrality of the core cultural institution in the Indonesian community in Australia. Likewise, we can say the same about the Greek Orthodox and the Jewish Chevra Kadisha in reproducing the community’s cultural knowledge and information access about EoL matters.

There is another commonality between these three more-structured communities that is they all had community funeral funds in place to support individuals or families who cannot cope with the financial cost of memorial services and burials. The financial issue is crucial because unlike those in less-structured communities, these individuals adjusted their preferences and choices for the mode of memorialisation and body disposal based on financial costing. Members of the more-structured communities, however, had less degree of freedom to negotiate around cost as full-body burial was insisted by their respective cultural traditions. Hence, community funeral funds can be significant for members of these communities. Aabis is also trying to promote the concept of the advanced care plan and funeral insurance within the Indonesian community because pre-arrangement can also relieve the financial burden of the community:

So I was telling people, ‘Be ready for the cost whatever it costs’. Some people believe that we don’t have to have funeral insurance; some people believe they don’t have to have funeral insurance because it looks like gambling. So they say whatever this, someone needs to pay for the service so from your money, from someone’s money. So I work within the Indonesian community in Victoria I was promoting the first choice is if someone pass away, the rule in Islamic community, in Islamic law is, if someone pass away so whoever pass away should pay their own funeral. It looks weird, but technically it is. If whoever pass away doesn’t have anything to buy, then the family member.

If the family member doesn't have anything to buy then have the extended family, friends and everything. So that's the choice of when we got the funding from. So I keep telling people, "This is the way we run it", but then I never go to the first one, I just go the last one first. Someone passed away this morning, someone pass away and then I told the community someone passed away, family are having difficulties to get the money, let's get the money. (Aabis, 50s, Indonesian, Muslim)

Aabis's words provided some useful insights into the operation of the community. The structure of a community is not given but is constantly reproduced through the information and knowledge distribution from the community's leaders. While Aabis' enthusiasms on advanced planning could also be due to his academic background, his framing of the necessity of the local, Australian concept of advanced care planning was nonetheless, rationalised through the traditional Islamic teaching: paying one's own funeral is stated in the Islamic law. We posed the question about advanced care planning to the Jewish community, and interestingly, there was little awareness or interest in the idea. Don, the community leader, believed this concept was not necessary for members of his community because the Chevra Kadisha looked after most of the EoL processes: from the mode of memorial services to the ritual requirements, to the mode of body disposal and even the cemetery site. Although Don also recognised there will always be individuals who do not follow the orthodox traditions, we note that none of our other participants who came from a Jewish background had indicated any radical differences with the orthodox traditions.¹² At the same time, we also note there is no mention that the funeral has to be a self-individualised, funded activity in the Jewish tradition. Hence, it could be the case that the notion of advanced care planning was not consistent with the Jewish view of funeral and memorialisation as a community affair – an idea Don emphasised throughout his interview.¹³

It is also interesting to note that individuals from the less-structured CALD communities tend to complain about the lack of information about EoL arrangements compared to those of the more-structured CALD communities.

¹² As mentioned, Veronica who self-identified as a non-orthodox, secular Jews still prefer a Jewish form of full-body burial. Likewise, Hugh (70s, Jewish), a retired professor who was born and raised in Australia and do not identified himself as an Orthodox Jews also preferred a Jewish traditional funeral for the religious emphasis on simplicity and equality.

¹³ Likewise we can refer back to Veronica's reflection of how her family was shocked to learn about a close family friend opted for cremation in Sydney. Her experience suggests a closely bonded community structure that individual choice can often have broader implications across the community.

Yvonne (60s, Filipino, Catholic), for example, only became more aware of the relevant information about death and dying in Australia through her career change of working in the aged care sector. When asked if she felt there was enough information available to her and her community, Yvonne provided a negative response:

No. Honestly, I don't think. I mean it may have just started the proponents of that end-of-life care. Probably the loved ones and the families would only think about it when they bring their loved ones in the aged care home or when they're in hospital. Before that, nobody talks about advanced care or end-of-life. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

The point here is not to say individuals from the more-structured CALD community had a better insight and information access to the relevant news and information about dying in Australia. Instead, it seems like the flow of information within the structured community is more centrally processed through the dominant cultural institutions within the community. Whereas for those in the less-structured community there is not a common or widely recognised point of information access, it hence requires individuals to do their research if, or whenever, they needed to. This is well illustrated through those Chinese participants, who all had different information sources from either their religious leaders (Buddhist organisation or Christian church), senior association or community support groups. For example, Qi (40s, Chinese Singaporean, Buddhist), who works in a community health organisation, was busy organising information sessions about death and dying for older Chinese migrants during the research period. She was not at all informed about the fact that the Manningham Council had partnered up with another Chinese community health organisation¹⁴ to run information sections for the Chinese community in the same area. The lack of inter-community communication and interactions amongst the Chinese community is not a reflection of the lack of organisation of this community, but suggests that the Chinese community is not centrally organised around one or two cultural institutions. Hence, individuals from the Chinese community tend to have different experiences with death and dying in Australia. Ping (40s, Malaysian Chinese, Christian) for example, did not find it difficult to access EoL-related information, as it is readily available through the church she associated with. Further, Ping was recovering from cancer treatment at the time of interview so the concept of death and dying, as she described, had been very real and close to her.

¹⁴ The organisation is a stakeholder to this project but did not participate the interview.

Preferences

Interview participants were asked if they had thought about their EoL-related arrangements and wishes and whether or not they would follow their respective cultural traditions. The preferences among members of the more-structured CALD community tend to be more uniform. Whereas members of the less-structured CALD community had a more individualised preference. All interview participants from the Muslim community preferred full-body ground burial. The same was true with members of the Jewish community; however, many of these participants also expressed their wishes for a simple funeral – a core value of the Jewish religious belief. For participants from the less-structured community like the Chinese, ‘individual preference’ was a regularly cited term to describe the lack of uniformity with funeral rites and memorialisation rituals of the community.

- The more-structured communities placed greater emphasis on being able to carry their cultural traditions as much as possible.
- The less-structured communities placed greater emphasis on individual’s needs and desires.
- Most members of the CALD category preferred to ‘rest in Australia’.
- Cemetery remained as the most preferred site to conduct memorialisation and mourning (as mentioned in this chapter’s introduction).
- All participants were aware that some cultural adjustment was needed in Australia.

Being able to maintain some/most of their traditions and cultural practice is one of the most crucial preferences among members of the CALD category. Don (50s, Jewish) pointed out one of the key practices the Jewish funeral insisted on:

The first key one is, the deceased is buried as quickly as possible. If at all possible on the same day of passing. It is actually prescribed that a body should not lie overnight. So to leave a body unburied between passing and burial, to leave it go through a night is considered very disrespectful. (Don, 50s, Jewish)

Likewise, Chris (50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox), a former social worker and social science researcher, also pointed out the insistence of full-body burial amongst his Macedonian community in Melbourne:

I mean with the Macedonian Orthodoxy if you’re baptised in the church, you are expected to be given a service in the church. You don’t need to, but 99% of the people do it. Orthodoxy doesn’t allow cremation. The priest will give you a service for the church, but they will not come to the cremation. (Chris, 50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox)

When asked about his preference, Chris was not too sure:

I've had this discussion with friends and some have said cremation for them and I said, just the thought of being burnt, I'm not sure whether I'll like it. Not that it matters of course, but I have been a bit ... (he did not find the right word at the time). (Chris, 50s, Macedonian, Macedonian Orthodox)

Chris' sense of uncertainty illustrated that individuals and cultural institutions have undergone some adjustments and reflection. Even to the more-structured community like the Jewish and the Orthodox Church, they did not necessarily strictly follow ritual rules and practices in an orthodox way; adjustments and compromises were made in accordance to the local regulations and expectations in Australia. For example, James from the Greek Orthodox noted that back in Greece, family usually bring the body (casket) home the day before the funeral service; this cannot be done in Melbourne because of the local health requirements. Further, the fact that family members do not necessarily live in the same city, and those who work outside of regular business hours (night and weekend), are also the considerations to excuse someone from attending the funeral. The combined mindfulness of regulatory requirements and the reality of a migrant's (working) life in Australia illustrate the cultural adjustments made by members of the CALD community.

The Greek Orthodox was not the only community that had experienced cultural adjustment. Don (50s, Jewish) also acknowledged that even though his community would prefer to have the deceased buried immediately after death, there are circumstances where a more extended period is required. For example, when the next of kin or close family members are not in Melbourne at the time; or waiting for Coroner's investigation in the case of unnatural death.

Participants who belonged to the less-structured communities also reflected on their experience with cultural adjustment when they were coming to terms with preferences. Although Tony (30s, Tongan, Christian), proudly declared that 'I am Australian born and I am proud to be buried here', this contradicts with his cultural preference of having a traditional Tongan burial, which involved the children digging up the tomb for the parents.

Further, the Tongan culture also involved re-using the same tomb for different generations – the bones of the previous generation (that is, grandparents) would be taken out and wrapped in a new cloth, then place on top of the newly deceased person's body, who would be buried in the same spot. The recycling of the tomb also resembled the idea of 'family grave'.

Tony, however, was well aware that both self-digging and recycling the tomb would be impossible in Australia as they go against the relevant regulations. Likewise, Allen (70s, Indian, Hindu) did not have any emotional or cultural connection with the conventional, burial-dominated cemetery in Australia. According to Hindu tradition, ashes (only cremation, no body-burial) are supposed to be released into a stream of running water to complete the journey of life. As a result, there is no cemetery for Hindus. Allen continued:

When I go to cemetery that will be either Christian or Muslim. There is no Hindu cemetery because when they burn the body, that ashes, they are collected and put in running water, or like River Ganges. Again, the belief is River Ganges is the Holy river so in the end everything that you put it in there and everything is gone back to where it came. So everything is mixed with the earth. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

This is clearly something cannot be easily achieved in Australia and Allen noted the lack of such facility in any cemeteries in Australia. He was hopeful that the situation could change in the future.

The difference between one's cultural/religious preference and the social expectation/regulation in Australia could sometimes lead to CALD communities' emotional distress. Jacqueline (40s, Maori New Zealander, no religion), whose daughter was killed in a car accident in Melbourne, had an even more traumatic experience when she was unable to fulfil the family's cultural preference. Jacqueline revealed that according to the Maori tradition, the family takes the deceased's body home where it remains until the family have finished their grieving. Unfortunately this could not be done for Jacqueline's daughter given the circumstances of her death:

I didn't get that option with my daughter because she was taken to The Coroner's Office and we weren't allowed to stay with her. It's heartbreaking because you're going against your own traditions knowing that she's in a building why can't somebody be there with her. You're not going to do anything to the body or anything like that it's just to make sure that they're safe, we're there to guide them on their journey and I wasn't allowed to do that. (Jacqueline, 40s, Maori New Zealander, no religion)

Jacqueline's reflection above illustrates the CALD group's preference of maintaining key cultural elements of funeral rites and memorialisation whilst negotiating different sets of values and expectation between Australia and their respective home culture. It was interesting to note how interview participants of the CALD category expressed their awareness of the cultural and social differences between Australia and their culture of origin.

Further, these individuals did not show any sense of dismay that some of their cultural/religious preferences could not be realised or accommodated in Australia. Instead, they believed it was because their respective community did not make enough effort to promote their cultural traditions to the mainstream Australian society.

Decision making

As a related theme to the previous section, interview participants were asked if they had gone through some decision-making processes such as the type of funeral service, the place or location of burial, and the mode of memorialisation. Particularly important to the CALD category was the issue of 'the resting place' as this decision could lead to profound emotional, cultural and logistic issues.

It was found that decision-making relates to individual and community perceptions of death and the cultural adjustment of living in Australia. The level of structure of the CALD community again, has become the crucial factor in determining:

- When an individual would make EoL related decision.
- What kinds of decisions were made.

For members of the more-structured community, there was a lower degree of variation in perceiving the meaning of death. James (30s, Greek), a community leader of the Greek Orthodox in Melbourne for example, argued that their community had a very transparent and direct understanding of death, which contrast with the 'death denial culture' in mainstream Australia and western societies:

The [western, Australian] people are afraid of death and dying whereas, in the Orthodox Church, it's the opposite. We are not afraid of death. We are not afraid of a dead person. We can touch a dead body. In Judaism, you are not allowed to touch the dead body, because it's unclean. During the funeral service with our cross, we kiss the person ... even though they are dead. We kiss them to say goodbye. So we are not afraid of death. (James, 30s, Greek, Greek Orthodox)

Two things are of interest here. Firstly, James' comparison between the Greek Orthodox beliefs with that of 'mainstream western society'; and secondly, the comparison with the Jewish community. The latter being a prominent religion that had an obvious community structure in conducting their funeral and memorialisation rituals. A further point to note here was the Greek Orthodoxy's position that death is part of living society and nothing to be afraid of; practices, such as kissing and touching the deceased's body, was part of the funeral ritual they insisted on, even in Australia.

Likewise, to support the notion of death as part of the living reality, James went on to describe what a Greek Orthodox funeral looks like:

We have a service the night before that goes for about 15 minutes. That's a very brief service, and then the funeral takes place, the next day after that service. It's about a half an hour long. The focus is on the transition of the soul, and you know the soul that leaves the body who enters the eternal life. And that's a mixture of sorrow but also happiness. Because as Christians, we are orthodox, but also Christian, we believe in the resurrection. We have hope in our service in our body, and the soul will be raised again, and so there is sadness because the person is leaving the community, leaving the family, leaving life which is blessed by God and we love life. But then there is all that sadness of the soul and the person leaving, and then there is the hope and the joy that that soul continues to live and that there will be the resurrection. So it's a mixture of sadness and joy. The service is set, as it is the words, the prayers and everything in the 7th Century. So we don't have John Lennon singing, we don't have any music or guitars, we have our traditional service with the set standard service for everybody. If it's a king or if it's a homeless person, it's the same service. (James, 30s, Greek, Greek Orthodox)

Despite the seriousness during the funeral procession, the occasion was believed to be community orientated and was an integral part of the community's everyday lives:

Yes, for our funerals, close family, the extended family and everybody who knows the person. So we can have 1000 people at the funeral. We don't have small funerals with four or five people, I have never seen. It's always a big event for the whole community. Everyone is welcome to a funeral. (James, 30s, Greek, Greek Orthodox)

Of course, both James and Don only represented the orthodox spectrum of their respective communities. There were non-orthodox individuals in both relatively structured communities who had a different opinion about the traditional funeral rites and memorialisation rituals. Vivian (60s, Greek, Greek Orthodox) expressed some dissatisfaction towards the structured format of Greek Orthodox funerals in Melbourne. Vivian arranged the funeral for her late mother about two years ago and disagreed with the Orthodox way of doing:

We had a slight difference of opinion with the priest and I'm pretty outspoken because I believe that we need to start changing some of the practices to be in line with life as it is today, not life as it was 70, 80 years ago when her father and her mother died; or her mother and her father died 55 years ago and 45 years ago. So that was a long time ago and it's a case of, who are the funerals for? Are they for the living or the dead?

And being for the living, I would like to walk away knowing that everyone at the funeral knew a little bit more about my mother than what they did before she passed away, a bit more than after she passed away. The interesting thing there is the Greek Orthodox Church doesn't allow a eulogy to be [delivered by the family]. (Vivian, 60s, Greek, Greek Orthodox)

Despite Vivian's rather non-orthodox view, it was equally interesting to note that she approached a Greek Orthodox Church in Melbourne to conduct her mother's funeral (hence the disagreement with the priest). This is what we meant by the 'structure' of the community. By structure, we do not mean every member of the community does the same ritual practice or insists on the same details of the orthodox format of EoL arrangements. Instead, we note that there was always this 'central institution' that members of the more-structured community tended to turn to whenever they are dealing with life and death events. While individuals such as Vivian might disagree or even dislike some of the details, she had never expressed disagreement with the format of having a funeral and conducting the memorialisation through a Greek Orthodox Church. Hence the decision she made was to go back to the Orthodox Church when there was death occurred in the family.

By contrast, members of the less-structured community generally had more diverse experience and perspective that they bring to their decision-making. A person's life experience and their immediate circumstances often overlapped when deciding about EoL arrangements. Felicia (50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian) for example, had experience with death and dying since an early age and within the family:

I've always been interested in death. I feel you can't consider life without considering death. We grew up knowing that the people on my father's side lived short lives. Because my grandfather and my uncle died at 45 and they all dropped dead from their first heart attack so it's a kind of ever-present thing. We talk about it, we exercise religiously, we eat very carefully, things like that. My father died when he was 54, I was going to be 20 or something like that when he died. So it's kind of like something we talked about and in fact for a long time I used to say, 'Well I'm not going to be living a very long life', until one day my daughter burst into tears and she said, 'I hate it when you say that'. And she was very young at the time and I thought, oh how insensitive of me so I stopped and then later on she said, 'Can you try and live to 75?' So I said, 'I'll do my best'. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

Her daughter's reaction became important because when asked if Felicia had anything decided or pre-arranged for herself, she was more ambiguous:

Well I assumed it would be scattered but I think that my daughter might have other ideas. And really, I'll be dead so it's really up to her. I'm not fussed because I think we all remember our lost family members in different ways and we must do what we need to do to live with it. Because I don't think you recover from a loss. To me, losing a family member is like maybe losing a small toe or something or developing a limp – you never come to terms with a loss, you just learn to live with it. I find that as I get older I have become more aware of lost family members maybe because I'm inching closer to the grave I don't know but all of a sudden I find I'm thinking more about my father who when I was in my 20s or 30s I didn't think so much about. Maybe because I'm the same age as he was when he died. When I'm with my siblings nowadays we talk a lot about our parents when we didn't used to in the past. So I don't know whether it's because in the past we were younger and busier and now we are older and we have time to reflect. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

The sense of uncertainty might be similar to the sense of indecision expressed by the Baby Boomers (BBs) who would not like to 'lock everything down' just yet. Felicia's indecision, however, constructed a narrative that was unique to the CALD category. It was clear that Felicia would have thought about the EoL decisions, given her family medical history. However, her daughter's unwillingness to engage in the topic made it hard to make some of these decisions. Therefore, Felicia's approach was simply to embrace all possibilities since, as she said, 'I'll be dead' by then. This expression shows how someone from a less-structured CALD community negotiates between their wishes and their immediate socioeconomic circumstances and relations with their immediate social/family networks. By putting off her decisions, Felicia displayed respect to her daughter's emotions as an expression of parental love.

The caring and love of the children (and family) also relate to a more pragmatic, logistic aspect of migrants' decision-making. Tony (30s, Tongan, Christian) provided another perspective as a son. Tony's parents had already expressed their preferences of 'going back' to Tonga for burial. Yet, Tony had already foreseen the future logistical challenge:

It would be easier for us children (if parents are buried in Australia) because we all live here. Instead of flying up to Tonga every once every five years, who knows. To visit them as well. Who knows if family members there would maintain their cemetery or they would just be left alone there. And I guess having it here with our new generation, they'd have connection with my parents because they are buried there. (Tony, 30s, Tongan, Christian)

Having a transnational family network was deemed as a potential challenge by the CALD participants, whose decisions are often not driven by cultural/religious reasons, but economic/logistic ones. Deepa (60s, Indian, Zoroastrian), who grew up in a Zoroastrian family, was facing a difficult choice to meet her late mother-in-law's wish, who did not want either cremation or ground burial but was instead, hoping for a traditional Zoroastrian open-coffin sky-burial. Knowing this is not possible in Australia, Deepa and her family were planning to have her mother-in-law sent back to India when the time came. However, according to Deepa, the family felt 'fortunate' when her mother-in-law passed away during a trip back to India and everything became more straightforward.

The transnational nature of one's family network created complexity. Individuals are required to accommodate the cultural expectation of the home country while respecting the socioeconomic and logistic realities of living in Australia. Interestingly, we found that this struggle was mainly voiced by individuals from the less-structured CALD community, whereas the more-structured CALD community did not mention this problem at all. Don, the Jewish leader, was quite confident that most members of the Jewish community would choose to be buried in Melbourne because the whole community is here. The decision of 'staying back' or 'moving' appears dependent on the person's sense of community belonging.

Values

The interviews with CALD participants also paid particular attention to the key values behind their preferences and decision-making. It is hard to generalise the findings here as this category consists of participants of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Hence, it was not useful to draw on the usual metric such as the religion or traditional culture to understand the values that underlined their preferences and decision-making of funeral rites and memorialisation.

However, there were some common values implied, subtly or expressively, across participants of this category, which refer to their experience of migration, acculturation, and identity-negotiation of living in Australia. The family was probably one of the most cited values across the different religious and ethnic communities within the CALD category. The consideration of both the immediate and extended families and the traditional implication of respecting family unity through the practices of funeral rites and memorialisation dominated the interviews. The family value often played a crucial, if not determining role, in forging one's decision-making and preferences. As mentioned earlier, migrants, in particular, were often faced with the decision of either staying in Australia or returning to their home country. While some had already made their decision, others were less decisive.

Yvonne had decided that she would one day return to the Philippines even though some of her immediate family were in Australia (son and husband, but her daughter is overseas). She had a strong kinship-orientated connection with the cemetery back in the Philippines and returned yearly visit to her mother's grave:

I talk to my mother from time to time who passed away eight years ago. And every time I go to the Philippines, I take my children to the cemetery and we take a photo and we celebrate. And then when it's her birthday, we cook her favourite food. You know, my siblings and I are all scattered in the world, so we have a way of celebrating with our family where we live and together on the internet I guess. (Yvonne, 60s, Filipino, Catholic)

Although Yvonne was a devoted Catholic, it is notable that her perception about cemetery was not so much determined by her religious faith but her value of family unity and responsibility. Indeed, her regular travels to the Philippines sounded like a family duty she needed to fulfil as her other siblings (most resided outside of the Philippines) visited the family graves at different period of the year. Hence, instead of being considerate of her religious practice, it was Filipino cultural value of family and collectivism that drive her travel decisions.

Ibrahim (40s, Indonesian, Muslim) by contrast, was less decisive. Ibrahim came from Indonesia and has lived in Melbourne for more than 17 years. Although his immediate family (wife and children) live in Australia, he was still undecided if they will return to Indonesia:

I didn't plan to living in Australia. We just plan to study and go back. But we found job here. If you remember at that time Asia has a very hardship on economy and financial. So we found job here, we found life here, but we ... me and my wife we still have this thinking, we still have this connection to go back. (Ibrahim, 40s, Indonesian, Muslim)

An absence of a sense of belonging in Australia was mainly due to the lack of extended family networks. According to Ibrahim, 'Indonesians, they are always want to be surrounded by their family'. However, it was not easy to just 'go back'. He continued:

It's not practical for us to go back ... because our children were born here, they were raised here and we found life here. (Ibrahim, 40s, Indonesian, Muslim)

Ibrahim's indecision revealed how a migrant had been 'torn apart' by the 'immediate family' such as children and even the future grandchildren, and the 'extended family', such as parents and cousins whom the individual grew up with.

For a migrant, these two types of family can lead to paradox and contradiction when it comes to EoL matters. We believe the type family an individual values more will determine their choice at the end. Of course, most participants were settled with their ideas. We found that those with stronger family networks in Australia generally would have the burial location settled. This sense of certainty was even the case if the individual could not perform or follow their traditional ritual fully. As mentioned earlier, Tony, the Tongan man who hoped for a traditional funeral, had nonetheless decided Australia would be his final resting place because he was born in Australia and his children are in Australia.

More importantly, we found that the family unit enabled some participants to realise new values of funeral rites and memorialisation. The previous section mentioned Allen's (70s, Indian, Hindu) desire to have a traditional Hindu funeral and memorial service, which involves scattering the cremated ashes into a running river. However, he was also quick to point out that in Australia that this tradition could be considered not environmentally friendly. We further queried about Allen's environmentally conscious attitude, which allowed him to compromise his cultural traditions. Allen attributed his change to his children who went to school in Melbourne:

I am more aware (of environmental issues) because I was always in environment side and always doing something ... And the biggest thing is, the kids. They are teaching their parents now, they are telling ... the kids go to school, they are learning about that, they come home, they discuss ... 'Dad this is not good, this is not good, we shouldn't be doing this'. So that's where the knowledge and information are spreading. (Allen, 70s, Indian, Hindu)

It was interesting to realise that family values had played such a crucial part in facilitating migrant's engagement and interaction with some mainstream, dominant values in Australia. In other words, we could say that family values allowed migrants and members of the CALD communities in general to navigate the Australian culture and ways of life, which in turn had shaped these individuals' preferences and decision-making of funeral rites and memorialisation.

It would be fair to say that family, religious or cultural values of each CALD community are the 'surface values' they draw on to make sense of their culture in a transnational, migration context. Deep down, however, laid the question of 'cultural identity and belonging' which might instigate their new sense of the value of being an Australian or feeling the belonging to the Australian society.

As Felicia (50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian), who migrated to Australia in 2002 put it:

I am Australian. I became an Australian last year actually. I think in my heart now I'm Australian more than I'm Singaporean. It was a process and I realised this when in the early days when I first moved to Australia I would go into the supermarket and think, what's wrong with this supermarket they don't sell bean curd? And this was the early days; nowadays you get bean curd. Soy milk – you have to go to an Asian store for that. Then over the years I'll go into a single supermarket and go why is the cheese section so limited. Like a Singaporean I guess, I negotiate the rules for my stomach. So it's what you get used to around you. I mean I use the supermarket as an example and over the years you adjust so sometimes even when I talk on the telephone I mean if you're speaking to an Australian you have to observe all the niceties and ask questions properly and when speaking in Australia you have to use a lot of words. In Singapore if I use a lot of words people get confused. (Felicia, 50s, Indian Singaporean, Christian)

Felicia had already decided Australia would be her 'final resting place'. Despite having spent most of her life in Singapore, Felicia was unequivocally Australian.

Conclusion and recommendations

Data of the CALD category told a narrative of cultural diversity and interactions through the funeral rites and memorialisation rituals in Australia. While members of the different CALD communities tried to maintain their respective traditions, their new cultural identities and sense of belonging were constructed through their navigation of the Australian way of burial, mourning and memorialisation, rather than simply insisting on their traditional practices.

Our findings in this section contrast with the conventional knowledge that migrant or CALD groups could have potential conflicts with mainstream society's expectations and ways of conducting funerals and memorialisation. The results point to a sense of 'harmony' amongst the different cultural and ethnic groups living together in Australia. While many participants expressed a preference for their cultural traditions, the actual decision-making generally turned out to be either different or contained some variations/adjustments. Such a paradox could be explained by participants' newfound, dual identities of being both Australian, while holding close their original cultural heritage.

Recommendations

1. A better understanding of the structural arrangements of the CALD community can help the communication and engagement efforts. For example, focus on the liaison with community

leaders when engaging with the more-structured communities. Communication with the less-structured communities requires an 'audience-focused', broad communication approach (i.e. traditional or digital platforms).

2. Continue to develop and promote the diversity and plurality of the Australian cemetery with the concept of 'cultural integration and embracement' in mind with communication and representations (building, design) efforts.
3. Build new facilities to diversify the mode of memorialisation and body disposal to accommodate a more diverse group of people. Alternatively, to allow the cemeteries to provide/facilitate such service outside of the cemetery space. The change of service might involve allowing the deceased's family to have more direct participation in the memorialisation and mourning process.
4. Develop a media strategy to engage and utilise ethnic language media, including the SBS, to properly introduce the nature of the cemetery sector in Victoria and the broader industry knowledge about the sector. In particular, the difference between 'funeral directors' (private) and the cemetery trusts (public), needs to be clarified.

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