



Steps to manage the estate of a loved one

Organising paperwork can be an annoying – but necessary – part of dealing with the passing of a loved one. To make things as simple as possible, use this downloadable checklist to handle all the necessary tasks so you can get back to spending time with family and friends.

ENSURE THE WILL IS CARRIED OUT

Depending on where you are around Australia, the process of carrying out the will may differ from state to state. However, generally the loved one who has passed away will have named an executor of their will. In short, the executor's role is to finalise all personal, financial and legal affairs of the deceased.

The process varies from state to state, so do your own research. Looking at NSW as an example, the first step is to [apply for a grant of probate](#) to officially take on the role of executor. In NSW, this is carried out via the Supreme Court. If there is no will, a [letter of administration](#) will be necessary to formally manage and distribute the assets of your loved one who has passed.

Until the will is carried out in full, it is the executor's responsibility to preserve the assets of the estate. If you are unsure how to do this, it's recommended that you speak to a legal professional experienced with wills and estates.

CLEAR ANY AND ALL OUTSTANDING DEBTS

You'll need to locate and gather all your loved one's assets before you can distribute them to the appropriate parties as outlined in their will. This means you'll need to get hold of [a number of documents](#), including but not limited to:

- Bank and credit card statements (from the past two years, at minimum)
- Real estate documents (e.g. land titles, mortgage receipts, rates notices)
- Investment certificates (e.g. shares, debentures)
- Life, income protection, home and contents, and [funeral insurance](#) policies
- Unpaid debt notices
- Superannuation papers
- Any prepaid funeral arrangements
- Medicare details

Now it's time to take care of the deceased's debts. People often pass away while they still have outstanding debts, and it is your duty as executor to clear those debts by using their cash (if there is enough) or selling some of the estate's assets to pay off the creditors.

The selling-off of assets can be a distressing time for loved ones left behind, especially when there are still big expenses to take care of. [Funeral insurance](#), for example, can make things easier for friends and family in the event of your passing – it can provide an immediate lump-sum payout so you can take care of pressing funeral expenses straight away. This is often a weight off your shoulders while the estate is being arranged, which can [often take months and sometimes even longer](#).

ORGANISE THE DEATH CERTIFICATE

Wrapping up the role of executor doesn't end once the debts are paid and assets are distributed. You'll also need to organise your loved one's death certificate.

You can apply for a death certificate through your state government's specific branch:

- [New South Wales](#)
- [Victoria](#)
- [Queensland](#)
- [South Australia](#)
- [Western Australia](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)
- [Australian Capital Territory](#)

If you are not the next of kin or executor of the estate, you will need to provide a [letter of authority](#), show that you have custody or guardianship of the deceased, or show power of attorney in order to get a death certificate.

You will also need to provide important information to get the death certificate processed depending on which state you are in (see the links above for more information). However, typically you will need to supply:

- Details of the death
- Your personal and contact details
- Personal identity documents as specified on the form
- A scanner or phone/tablet camera to upload copies of the documentation required
- Company documents (if applicable)
- Evidence you have permission to be provided with the death certificate (if applicable)
- [Payment](#)

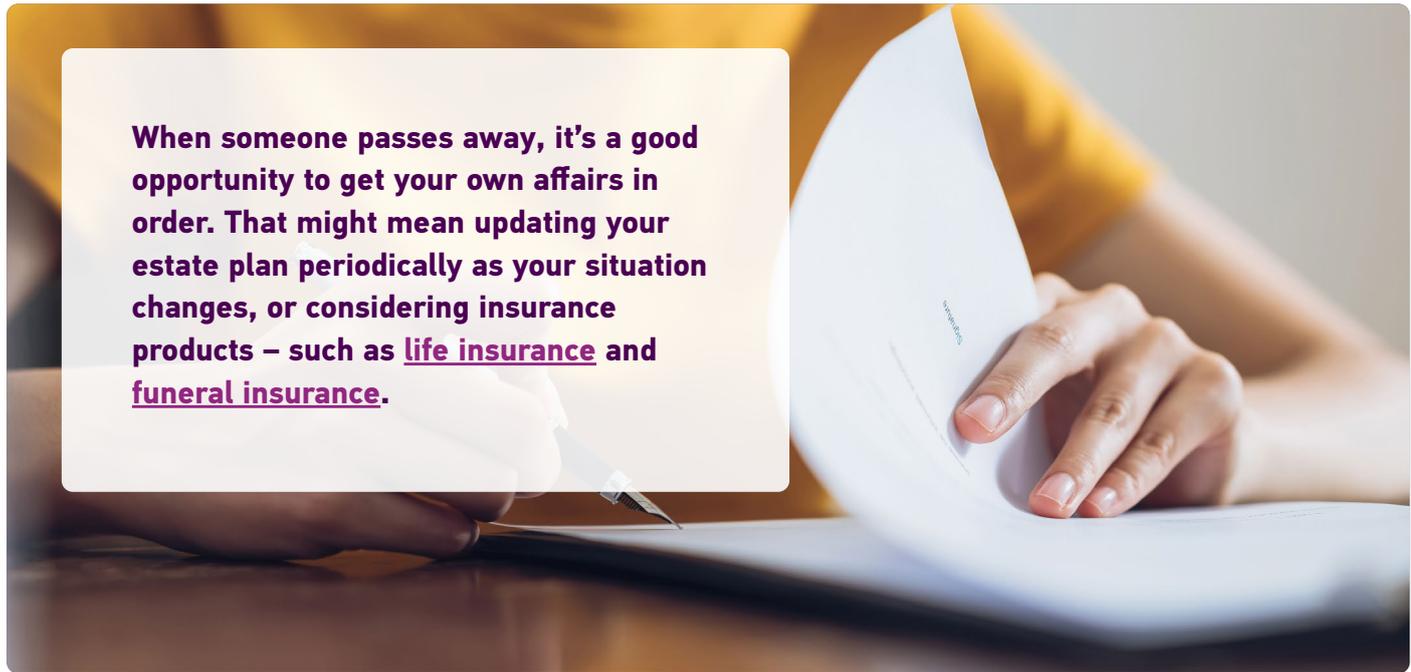
LODGE YOUR LOVED ONE'S FINAL TAX RETURN

Finally, it's time to lodge your loved one's last tax return. This is only necessary if the person who passed away was earning an income above the tax-free threshold (\$18,200 annually for Australian residents, as of December 2019).

You'll need their tax file number, which you can apply for through the Australian Taxation Office, and then complete their date of death tax return with all relevant financial, insurance and Medicare documentation that you collected before distributing the estate.

CONCLUSION

The death of a family member or friend can be a busy, confusing and sombre time, but it's important that the administrative duties are tended to as efficiently as possible. We hope this checklist will help make a difficult time slightly easier – so you can get back to commemorating the life of your loved one.



When someone passes away, it's a good opportunity to get your own affairs in order. That might mean updating your estate plan periodically as your situation changes, or considering insurance products – such as [life insurance](#) and [funeral insurance](#).