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A.C.N. 004 508 007

REGISTERED OFFICE:

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(03) 9534.0208 Continuous Service

MELBOURNE CHEVRA KADISHA CEMETERY,

Browns Road, (off Police Rd.)
Springvale, Victoria
(03) 9701.0578
Fax: (03) 9525.3954

Dear Sir / Madam,

On behalf of the Jewish community I would like to make this presentation to your organisation with the hope and desire to inform you and the wider community of the procedure involved in the Jewish way of death and dying.

Should there be any problems in the implementation of the procedure, would you please contact our office and I shall personally attend at any time so as avoid any misunderstanding.

Jewish Procedure in Hospitals After Death

"The principle governing the case of the body immediately following death is the sacredness of man. The manner of respect is governed and detailed by religious tradition rather than by personal sentiment and whim alone."

- Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*

1. During the last minutes of life, no-one in the presence of the deceased may leave, excepting those whose emotions are uncontrollable, or the physically ill. It is a matter of greatest respect to watch over a person as they pass from this world to the next.
2. After death has been determined, the eyes and mouth of the deceased should be closed, either by family or friends.
3. The position of the body should be so oriented that the feet face the doorway if possible. When removing a deceased person from a room, the deceased should be removed feet first.
4. The deceased should not be touched or moved except for their honour such as:
To straighten the body (by touching through the bed linen) if it is found in an awkward position.
Adjust the bed so the body remains flat.
Place the arms beside the body.
Remove all pillows from around the body and leave one under the head.
Cover the face with top sheet.

Cut off all tubes and cathodes, etc. from their source.

Do not wash the body.

Do not wrap in plastic, unless the hospital procedure directs otherwise, as this will cause delays to us being able to remove from the hospital.

Do not put false teeth in the mouth, let them accompany the deceased as they are buried with them.

With regard to jewellery, it may be left on the body, as we remove and return it to the family.

5. From the moment of death until the burial, the deceased may not be left alone. Therefore, it is most important that the family be able to discharge its duty and the hospital help them by assisting in the early removal of the deceased into our care.

6. We would appreciate your co-operation and assistance in the removal of the body from the hospital to our funeral parlour by the following:

When the doctor has certified the death of the deceased, you are to make sure that the blue medical certificate is issued at that moment, thus saving your nursing staff and family the added pressure of trying to find the doctor afterwards. If you have difficulties in obtaining the medical certificate, would you please explain to the family that this will impede the removal of the deceased from the hospital.

We would like to inform you about the Jewish position on autopsies and in particular the situation with the Coroner's Court. In the general hospital position Jewish Law forbids the desecration of the human body unless absolutely necessary after consultation with Rabbinic authorities. With regard to the Coronial Services Act (Section 29 & 26) all people have the right to object in writing prior to an autopsy being performed. The Coroner has to answer the request with a decision for or against the objection.

If the Coroner concludes that an autopsy must take place, the final actions for the families is that they can then proceed to the Supreme Court (or withdraw their objection). We have lodged innumerable objections for the community and we take the role of advising the people concerned, writing the objections, liaising with the Coroner's Court and assisting them with medical files, etc, so that the coroner can make a decision as quickly as possible.

Should a deceased person have to be sent to the Coroner's Court, would you please make sure that the complete medical files accompanies the body to the Coroner's Court as this will save time in finding where they are and sending someone to collect them.

8. When the parts of the body are removed for surgical reasons, for example limbs or organs, such parts of the body must be retained and the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha informed immediately, and in addition should be consulted where there is any doubt. Under such circumstances the patient of his family should not be disturbed on these matters. We shall arrange for collection and burial in accordance with Jewish Law. (There is no charge for this service as it is a part of our rites).

9. Prenatal Procedure: With regard to stillborn, premature births and foetuses, disposal is NOT PERMITTED as they require burial under Jewish Law, in such cases we should be contacted and the parents informed accordingly of the procedure as above.

10. The Melbourne Chevra Kadisha is a non-profit religious organisation which provides a service 24 hours a day, seven days a week by phoning 9534-0208 (Press 1).

On the Jewish Sabbath, High Holydays and Festivals, we have an answering service

which gives the number of our representative who shall attend punctually to the call. Relatives of the deceased should be told that the Melbourne Chevra Kadisha will be informed of the case and that we shall contact them at the conclusion of the Sabbath or the Jewish Festival in order to make the appropriate funeral arrangements.

11. For pastoral care and counseling services, we can assist you in providing Rabbis and professionally trained persons to attend and help our brethren. We offer this service as we are the relevant Jewish communal institution to help provide this service and are available at all hours.

I earnestly hope this information will benefit all parties concerned by helping to make a difficult situation a little easier.

Yours Sincerely,
Melbourne Chevra Kadisha

Ephraim Finch
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR