



Death certificates: interim v final

Date: Tuesday November 7, 2017

In South Australia, when a death has occurred and the cause or date of death is unknown, it is common for an interim death certificate to be issued by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

This will normally be completed with the assistance of a funeral director. Legislation requires basic information for the issue of a certificate including the deceased's full name, address, date of birth (and death), place of birth, marriages and children.

Once issued, an interim death certificate acts as proof of death. This can then be used for purposes that become necessary in the administration of someone's estate or registering their death with an organisation.

It is not necessary for an interim death certificate to include details of the cause of death. That will be completed once the South Australian State Coroner has completed any investigations.

A death **must** be [reported to the State Coroner](#) when the death occurs in a number of ways, including:

1. when the death has occurred unexpectedly;
2. when the death has occurred by violent, unusual, unnatural or unknown causes;
3. when the death has occurred within 24 hours of being discharged from a hospital; or
4. when the death has occurred after seeking emergency medical treatment at a hospital.

Once the State Coroner has completed their preliminary investigation they may then make findings about the cause of death or hold an inquest to obtain further information.

Once the State Coroner has requested, received and considered any reports outlining the cause of death, an official determination will be made and the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages will be notified. A final death certificate can then be sought recording the cause of death.

When dealing with a deceased person's assets it is not uncommon for insurance policies (such as life insurance, superannuation, mortgage or credit card insurance) to wait until a final death certificate has been released before paying out on the policy.

Depending on the circumstances of death it is also not uncommon for a final death certificate to be unavailable for up to 12 months, and beyond, from the date of someone's passing. This can be distressing to families and provide financial difficulties in certain circumstances, which is unfortunate.

There are issues which may lead to significant delays in dealing with estate assets.

The Andersons Wills & Estate Planning team always recommend you speak to a solicitor concerning the Will of a deceased, particularly if you are named as an executor.

Please note, this Blog is posted in Adelaide, South Australia by Andersons Solicitors. It relates to South Australian legislation. Andersons Solicitors is a medium sized law firm servicing metropolitan Adelaide and regional South Australia across all areas of law for individuals and businesses.