

The Federal Government has banned large indoor and outdoor gatherings to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), and this includes sorry business and family gatherings.

We know sorry business and other cultural reasons for large gatherings in communities are very important, but it is important to understand that it will put Elders and others who are already ill at serious risk if you don't observe health advice.

Travel restrictions

Travelling in and out of communities even to attend smaller funerals or gatherings will increase the risk of infection within your community, and many communities have put local travel restrictions in place for this reason.

Talk to families early

Communicating with the family about the risk of infection, and the significant risk to their own health, to their family and their community, are discussions that may take several conversations, and it is best to start the conversation early.

Other ways for Sorry Business

Families could be encouraged to consider alternative options, with the support of their local councils and churches, such as:

- Working with churches in key communities to do a live broadcast of a church service. For example a sermon held in Hope Vale could be skyped or broadcast to community members at Wujal Wujal and Cairns at the same time.
- Support and encourage families to send video messages of condolence that could be provided to the family to screen at the funeral.
- If there is limited access to technology, communities could be encouraged to hold memorial services in their own community at the same time as the funeral service.
- Supporting families to provide copies of funeral programs and/or eulogies for distribution at the live broadcast and or memorial service.
- Some communities have access to broadcast facilities under the Commonwealth Broadcast in Remote Communities Scheme (BRACS), which may enable broadcast of the service by radio.

- Participation in options utilising technology such as smartphones, facetime, skype and or coordinated memorial services, but also with a localised wake to enable people to grieve in a culturally safe environment with family and friends.

Social distancing

Please follow health precautions to help protect yourself and your community by practicing good hygiene, self-isolation and social distancing even during this time of grieving.

What is social distancing?

- staying at home when you are unwell
- avoiding large public gatherings if they're not essential
- keeping a distance of 1.5 metres between you and other people whenever possible
- minimising physical contact such as shaking hands.

Essential indoor gatherings should apply social distancing and good hygiene practices, including enough space to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres between people and providing hand hygiene products and suitable rubbish bins, with frequent cleaning and waste disposal. These measures also apply to outdoor spaces.

Help is available

If you or someone you care about is distressed, in crisis, suicidal or needs someone to talk to, help is available. The following services provide confidential, non-judgmental support.

This service is a confidential mental health telephone triage service for Queenslanders that provides the first point of contact to public mental health services.

1300 MH CALL (1300 642 255)

This service provides 24 hour assessment, referral, advice, and hospital and community health centre contact details.

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

More information

If you would like assistance with organising any of these options, please contact your local Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) office at www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/regional-centres