



A final place to rest

“Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.”

When Robert Louis Stevenson wrote his own epitaph, *Requiem*, he knew where he wanted to lie – on Mount Vaea, overlooking his Samoan home. For many people, however, their final resting place is a decision often left to family, or even strangers, to make.

We spend a considerable part of our lives deciding where we want to live, but considerably less time thinking about where we would like our final resting place to be.

For some, the answer is straightforward – alongside a husband or wife, in a family grave, or in a cemetery with a longstanding connection. Others may prefer cremation, with their ashes buried, kept with family members or scattered somewhere meaningful.

Whatever the choice, one of the most important things we can do is make sure somebody else knows about it.

Auckland Memorial Park cemetery

manager James Dunn says more people are now prepared to talk about death and make plans in advance, although some generations remain reluctant.

“The older generation tend to be worse, especially the men, who tend to have their head in the sand around that side of things,” he says.

Most plot sales at the privately managed Silverdale cemetery are now to people planning ahead, particularly those who

want a traditional burial.

“If you are considering a body burial, having a plot takes a lot of stress away at the time,” Dunn says. “It can be a stressful and confronting decision for families in the moment, whereas if they have a plot, it’s all sorted and the family knows what is going to happen.”

For Hibiscus Coast residents, Auckland

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Memorial Park on East Coast Road offers traditional burial plots, family arrangements and ash interments, with plots able to be purchased in advance.

Further south, Auckland Council's North Shore Memorial Park at Schnapper Rock offers new and existing burial plots, ash plots, an ash scattering area, crematorium and chapel facilities. Smaller historic cemeteries also exist around the wider Rodney area, although availability varies.

Dunn says burial generally follows a fairly familiar pattern. After the funeral service, family and friends gather at the prepared gravesite, where a celebrant or minister may conduct a committal ceremony.

Ash interments can be much less formal, but he recommends creating some form of ceremony around them.

"Otherwise you are standing there with a box, put it in the ground and no-one knows what to do with themselves," he says. "Having a ceremony gives the occasion a lot more meaning and purpose."

Cremation can give families more time to decide. Ashes may be interred in a cemetery, placed in a memorial setting or, in many circumstances, scattered somewhere meaningful, although rules and cultural considerations apply.

Auckland Council requires permission before ashes are scattered within council cemeteries and does not allow scattering in regional parks. On private property, permission should be obtained from the landowner. Council also advises that scattering ashes in waterways, on maunga or in places where food is gathered or cultivated may be culturally inappropriate to Māori.

Burial outside recognised cemeteries, burial grounds and urupā is also tightly restricted under New Zealand law, so anyone dreaming of being buried beneath



Memorial Park offers traditional burial plots, family arrangements and ash interments, with plots able to be purchased in advance.

a favourite tree at home should investigate the legal requirements before including that request in their final plans.

Funeral and burial wishes can be written down, included in a will and, most importantly, discussed with family. However, those wishes are not necessarily legally binding. Once someone dies, an enduring power of attorney ceases, and responsibility generally passes to the

executor of the will.

That makes communication particularly important.

"It's so the family who are going to have to deal with it have a clear understanding of what the wishes of the person are, and then they are able to carry those out," Dunn says.

For him, Dying Matters Week (September 7-13) helps remove some of the uncertainty

around death. (see p22)

"The amount of people who come here who have never directly experienced this before, they have no real idea," he says.

Planning a final resting place does not need to be morbid. It is simply another part of planning ahead – and one conversation now can remove a difficult decision from the people we leave behind.

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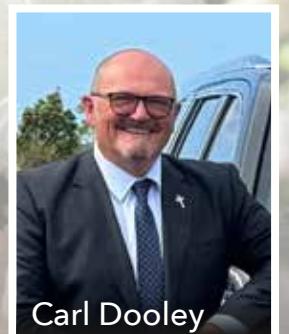
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Tony Clark

Knobys Boxes Ltd

For Hibiscus Coast builder Tony Clark, the move into making coffins began with an unusual request.

Tony, who runs Kiwi-owned construction company Building by Tony, was approached through Waikumete Cemetery's natural burial area to make simple, natural coffins. With his background in cabinetmaking and construction, he began experimenting with designs that were practical, affordable and easy for families to personalise.

The result was Knobys Boxes – locally manufactured plywood coffins supplied as easy-to-assemble kits.

Tony says the idea is to give people more freedom over something that is often left until the very end of life.

Rather than buying a finished coffin through the traditional route, families can purchase one in advance, assemble it themselves and decorate it however they choose. Some people even use the boxes for storage until they are needed.

"We encourage people to do it their way," Tony says.

The coffins can be painted, decorated by family and friends, or turned into a personal tribute reflecting someone's life, interests and personality. They are suitable for both traditional burial and cremation, while different options can also be made for natural burials.

Tony also makes bespoke coffins for people wanting different timbers, dimensions or designs, including larger sizes and coffins made without metal fittings for Jewish burial requirements.

The standard coffins are kept in stock and manufactured locally, keeping the process straightforward and costs down.

For Tony, the aim is to change the way people think about buying a coffin – making it something that can be planned ahead, involve the family and become part of celebrating a life, rather than simply another decision made at a difficult time.



Choosing a monument

Choosing a final resting place is one decision, but deciding how that place will be marked can be just as personal.

For generations, the traditional headstone has provided a lasting record of a life – a name, dates and perhaps a few words chosen by family. While those basics remain, Neve Pridmore, of family-run Total Monumental Services, says families are increasingly looking for memorials that say something more about the person being remembered.

The business grew out of Epsom Funeral Home, which is run by her partner Dom Pridmore's family. Total Monumental Services began in the family garage, initially as a way of helping families reduce the cost of monuments, and now guides people through everything from traditional headstones to more individual designs.

One of the first considerations, Pridmore says, is where the person is to be buried, because the cemetery and type of plot will

determine what can be installed.

"When someone has passed, we look at which cemetery they have chosen and what plot they have, and then we can guide them through what is allowed and what will be suitable," she says.

Auckland Council has requirements around monuments in the cemeteries it manages, including their dimensions, materials, location and installation. Monument work must comply with the New Zealand standard for headstones and cemetery monuments, while individual cemetery and plot requirements can also vary. Private or trust-run cemeteries may have different rules, so checking what is permitted before settling on a design is important.

Granite and marble remain popular choices, although what is available can change as particular stone quarries are depleted. Much of the stone used in New Zealand is imported already polished because

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finishing it here can add considerably to the cost.

What goes onto the stone, however, has changed.

Just as funerals have increasingly become celebrations of a person's life, Pridmore says families are looking for ways to bring more personality, colour and imagery into permanent memorials.

That might mean incorporating artwork, a favourite flower, an animal or another image with particular meaning. Total Monumental Services also creates traditional Chinese memorials and can produce customised designs, provided they remain respectful and comply with the rules of the cemetery.

Modern technology is widening those possibilities. CNC engraving allows detailed images and designs to be etched into stone, while laser engraving will offer further options. Plaques can also provide a simpler memorial, particularly where a conventional headstone is not wanted or appropriate.

Increasingly, people are making these decisions themselves rather than leaving them entirely to those who survive them.

Pridmore says families sometimes arrive with photographs or examples of monuments the person liked, while on other occasions instructions have been

discovered among their belongings.

"We sometimes get handwritten notes that people have found in a diary," she says.

Leaving some guidance can take another decision away from family members at an already difficult time. It does not necessarily mean designing your own headstone down to the last detail; simply recording whether you would prefer something traditional or contemporary, the wording you would like, or an image or symbol that matters to you can provide a useful starting point.

Where someone dies without family able to make those decisions, a funeral director can help arrange an appropriate memorial.

And remembrance is not limited to people. The company is expanding its work with cremation urns and memorial tiles, including tiles carrying photographs of much-loved pets.

"Animals are family too," Pridmore says. "It's nice to be able to remember them."

Ultimately, a monument serves two purposes: it marks where someone rests, but it also tells future visitors something about who was there. Taking a little time to think about what we might want that marker to say can be one more useful part of planning ahead.

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From left, Brittany Newman, Michael Hawkins, Tony Edward.

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Starting conversations about dying

Death is something every family eventually encounters, yet it remains one of the subjects many of us find hardest to talk about.

Dying Matters Week, which runs nationwide from September 7 to 13, aims to make those conversations a little easier, encouraging people to talk about later life, dying, grief and loss, as well as the practical decisions that can make things easier for those we leave behind.

This year's theme, Shaping Your Legacy, asks people to think more widely about what a legacy means. It can include the practical things we leave behind, such as property and possessions, but also family traditions, favourite recipes, stories, values, achievements and memories.

Dying Matters Week was initiated in Aotearoa by Go With Grace and now includes events around the country. In Auckland, Honohono Tātou Katoa: Creating Compassionate Communities is also closely involved, working alongside communities, Auckland Libraries and hospices to provide education, events and support.

Its compassionate communities approach recognises that caring for people through illness, dying, loss and grief is not solely the responsibility of health professionals, but something families, friends and communities can share.

On the Hibiscus Coast, Ōrewa and Whangaparāoa libraries will provide spaces where people can learn, reflect, remember and, importantly, talk.

Love Notes to the Departed:

Ōrewa Library, September 7 to 13, during library opening hours

An interactive exhibition inviting people to remember those who have died through

heartfelt written messages and artwork.

The artworks accompanying the display were created by local artist and art teacher Camilla Copley and her Year 9 and 10 students from Hare Krishna School.

Create your Bucket List:

Ōrewa and Whangaparāoa libraries, September 7 to 13

Dying Matters Week is not only about preparing for death – it is also about making the most of life.

... to make conversations about death and dying feel less daunting, while encouraging people to think about how they want to live ...

Interactive Bucket List boards will encourage visitors to think about the things they still want to see, experience or accomplish. Take-home posters will also be available, giving people the chance to create their own lists, put them somewhere visible and perhaps encourage family and friends to join them.

The idea is simple: plan ahead, enjoy the present and make time for the things that still matter.

Books for all ages:

Ōrewa Library, during library opening hours

A curated collection of books for children and adults will provide another way to explore subjects surrounding death, dying, grief, loss and remembrance.

Books can often help start conversations that people may otherwise struggle to have, particularly within families or with



Hibiscus Coast Dying Matters regional coordinator Marama Winder

children, while also providing different perspectives on experiences that affect everyone at some point.

Flowers for reflection:

Floral centrepieces will sit at the heart of the Dying Matters Week displays at both libraries.

The seasonal arrangements, donated by Flowers by Joanne in Ōrewa and Flower Talk in Red Beach, symbolise reflection, remembrance, hope, love and the beauty of life.

At the conclusion of Dying Matters Week, both arrangements will be donated to Harbour Hospice.

Together, the events reflect the wider aim of Dying Matters Week – to make



conversations about death and dying feel less daunting, while encouraging people to think about how they want to live, what matters to them and the legacy they may leave behind.

Further Dying Matters Week events are being held across Auckland through Honohono Tātou Katoa and throughout Aotearoa through Go With Grace.

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Plan early for enduring powers of attorney

Planning for what might happen if we can no longer make decisions for ourselves can be an uncomfortable conversation, but Silverdale lawyer Patricia (Trish) Parker says it is one that is better held too early than too late.

Parker, a director of Martin & Parker Law, says people often associate losing mental capacity with dementia and a gradual decline in later life, when the reality can be much less predictable.

"The sooner the better because there are unexpected health events that affect capacity that no one sees coming," she says. "Strokes and other medical events like that can happen in younger years."

An enduring power of attorney, or EPA, allows someone you trust to make decisions on your behalf. In New Zealand there are two types – one covering property and financial affairs and another covering personal care and welfare.

For many families, the conversation arises when parents are considering moving into a retirement village and beginning to review their wider legal and financial affairs. However, Parker says leaving it until then can create problems if a person's capacity has already deteriorated.

A person must have the mental capacity to create or replace an EPA, and Parker says lawyers also need to ensure the decision is being made freely.

"We have to meet with the parents to ensure there is no duress and that they understand – that they aren't forced to do anything," she says.

Understandably, some people are concerned that giving another person authority over their affairs could leave them vulnerable to abuse. Parker says this

It's a bit like an insurance policy. You may never have to use it, but if you do, then you'll be very glad you put it in place.

is something lawyers discuss carefully with clients, including when the EPA will take effect and what safeguards can be included.

If a property EPA is intended only for future incapacity, it can be drafted so the attorney cannot begin acting on that basis until the required medical assessment has been made.

"So kids can't decide that Mum's lost capacity and they are taking control," Parker says.

Choosing the right person is therefore important. Substitute attorneys can also be nominated in case a first choice, such as a spouse or partner, later becomes unable to act.

Parker recommends reviewing EPAs about every five years and whenever circumstances change.

"Things change, relationships change, capacity changes," she says.

Her advice is to treat an EPA as part of normal forward planning rather than something only needed when illness arrives.

"We always use the analogy that it's a bit like an insurance policy. You may never have to use it, but if you do need it, then you'll be very glad you put it in place."

And, she says, that conversation is generally easier while everyone involved is still well.

"With all estate planning, put it in place early, review it, don't just put it into a drawer and never think about it again."

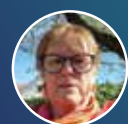


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Evolving to meet changing needs

Juanita Taylor and her sister Hayley say they're lucky to have had Harbour Hospice support their family twice – first with their dad Roger, who had lung cancer, and more recently with their mum Lorraine, who had breast cancer.

"Lucky because having Hospice in your corner when life gets really hard is genuinely something to be grateful for," Juanita says.

She says her parents had different ideas about what they wanted from end-of-life care. While her dad sought peace in the sanctuary of Hospice's Inpatient Unit at Red Beach, her mum wanted to be cared for at her Hibiscus Coast home, with family and friends able to visit.

Both had the experiences they wanted, Juanita says, but there were also important similarities in their care.

"Both got the same unwavering support, and both were cared for with the same compassion and respect."

Juanita says Hospice was there every step of the way.

"More than that, they're one step ahead. The number of times they suggested we try something and we wondered, 'Do we really need to yet?', only to realise two days later that we did."

The little things Hospice did left a lasting impression too.

"At the Inpatient Unit they hung a picture on Dad's door of a yacht at sunset. This might not seem like much, but to Dad it meant everything. Dad was a sailor and had spent many years sailing the Pacific. This image said, 'We see you. We know you. You are safe here.'"

"For Mum, it was the practical support – the phone calls at 9pm to check in, and the nurse who noticed Mum was getting stiffer and suggested we look at different ways to help move her.

"Whenever they asked Mum how she was doing, she would just say, 'I'm good'. They knew how to gently push a little further, until Mum would say, 'Well, I don't want to bother anyone, but ...' The nurses were incredibly understanding and compassionate."

Harbour Hospice chief executive Amanda Fowler says compassionate, patient-centred care will always be at the heart of Harbour Hospice services.



From left Juanita, Lorraine and Hayley.

“But we are at a pivotal moment in our history. Our community is changing. The way people die is changing. And the way they will need to be cared for is changing.”

"But we are at a pivotal moment in our history. Our community is changing. The way people die is changing. And the way they will need to be cared for is changing."

Amanda says when Hospice was established, most of its care was built around people with cancer.

"Today, more than a third of the people we care for have non-cancer conditions. And over the next decade, along

with the rising population, non-cancer conditions will drive almost all the growth in need across our region.

"To remain fit for purpose, we must evolve our model of care now. Standing still is not an option, and this will be one of the most critical evolutions our service ever makes."

Amanda says families need to be supported through longer, more complex journeys.

"As people live longer, we will see more chronic disease, frailty, dementia and comorbidities. In fact, in the past three years we've already seen a 25 per cent increase in the length of time someone will be in our service.

"We've begun the work, but the mahi ahead is significant. And, as always, the support of our community will help us achieve this. In fact, the support of our community matters now more than ever."

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