Funerals Australia

Formerly Australian Funeral Directors Association

September 2025

Better practice sustainability guide for funeral directors

With the generous support of

Government of South Australia

Green Industries SA

Foreword

As the Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) marks 90 years of service to the profession and community in 2025, we are not only celebrating our legacy—we are embracing the future through our bold rebrand to Funerals Australia.

We remain the trusted national voice on funeral matters, setting the standard for professionalism, driving innovation, and championing exceptional customer experiences across the sector.

It is both timely and appropriate that Funerals Australia is also leading the industry's sustainability transformation, supported by the LEAP Grant issued by Green Industries SA (GISA). Through our partnership with 2XE, South Australian member organisations are gaining invaluable expertise to strengthen and grow their sustainable practices.

Embracing sustainability isn't just good practice—it's smart business. It helps reduce operational costs, aligns with shifting consumer expectations, and contributes to a more resilient and environmentally responsible future for our profession.

Funerals Australia is proud to champion the *Better Practice Sustainability Guide for Funeral Directors*, and we encourage all members to explore it as a practical tool for positive, future-focused change.

Dale Gilson
CEO Funerals Australia

South Australia has long championed innovation, resilience, and vision—traits that have shaped both our state and our funeral industry.

In 1837, Colonel William Light showed foresight by including a public cemetery in his plan for Adelaide within a year of the first settlers arriving. While Indigenous Australians practised cremation long before European settlement, South Australia became the first state to legalise cremation in 1891. By 1901, Australia's first purpose-built crematorium began construction on West Terrace.

South Australia opened the nation's first lawn cemetery in 1960, introduced Australia's first natural burial ground in 2008, and became home to the first Australian cemetery to receive ISO14001 Environmental Certification in 2020.

The SA Division of Funerals Australia is proud of our heritage, with some member firms tracing their roots to the mid-1800s. With this guide, we build on that legacy, offering practical tools and direction to embed environmental sustainability into every aspect of our work.

Sustainability is more than environmental responsibility; it also supports the social and economic well-being of our communities and profession. This guide positions our local industry to lead with integrity and innovation as we transition to best practice.

As President of the SA/NT Division and a National Director of Funerals Australia, I urge all members to embrace this opportunity. Grasp this guide enthusiastically, work with it, and help shape a more sustainable future for our industry.

Sharyn Moll
President SA/NT Division & National Director, Funerals Australia

I am pleased to introduce you to the *Better Practice Sustainability Guide for Funeral Directors*. A guide that will assist us to move towards a more sustainable future, in South Australia and across Funeral Australia's members nationally.

The South Australian Government is pleased to have contributed funding towards the development of the Guide through Green Industries SA (GISA). GISA is leading South Australia's transition to a circular economy aligned to the South Australian Government's net zero, sustainability and circular economy commitments.

The funeral industry plays a uniquely meaningful role within our communities, offering essential services and profound care during life's most sensitive moments. As society's values evolve to focus increasingly on the legacy we leave future generations, there is an expectation for businesses, including funeral directors, crematoriums, and related service providers, to incorporate sustainability into their core practices. The *Better Practice Sustainability Guide for Funeral Directors*, developed collaboratively by Funerals Australia and GISA, addresses this growing imperative by providing clear and practical pathways to embed environmental sustainability throughout the funeral sector.

This guide is designed not only to respond to the immediate environmental challenges facing our communities but also to assist funeral providers in proactively reducing their environmental footprint. It outlines actionable strategies to enhance resource efficiency, from waste reduction and energy conservation to sustainable water usage and thoughtful facility design. Emphasising the circular economy, this resource advocates for minimising waste, maximising resource reuse, and adopting sustainable procurement practices that benefit both the environment and the broader community.

Additionally, the guide introduces funeral directors to emerging practices such as natural burials, eco-friendly burial products, and advanced cremation technologies that significantly lower emissions. By embracing these innovations, funeral services can meet growing consumer preferences for environmentally conscious options, demonstrating their commitment to sustainability.

Engaging sensitively with families on environmental considerations is also thoughtfully addressed, ensuring funeral providers can navigate conversations about sustainability with empathy and clarity. Such dialogue fosters greater awareness and collective action, enabling communities and funeral providers alike to participate meaningfully in the journey towards a sustainable future.

By adopting this guide, funeral professionals will not only reduce operational costs and environmental impacts but also reinforce their vital role in leading responsible, compassionate, and sustainable industry practices.

All industries and sectors have a role to play in driving a more efficient, sustainable and circular economy. Partnerships and leadership by peak bodies are crucial to these objectives, and I commend Funerals Australia for demonstrating its commitment to these through this Guide. Together, we can create lasting positive change, honouring both the lives we commemorate and the planet we all share.

I look forward to the outcomes both in South Australia and nationally from implementation of the Guide.

The Hon Susan Close MP
Deputy Premier

Welcome to the guide

Funerals Australia, in partnership with Green Industries SA (GISA), has developed this guide to help funeral directors, crematoriums, and related service providers integrate sustainability into their operations. This resource provides practical steps to reduce environmental impact while maintaining the highest standards of service and care.

Sustainability in this guide refers to environmental sustainability, focusing on responsible resource management, emissions reduction, and sustainable decision-making within funeral services.

This guide explores key areas of sustainability, including:

- The role of sustainability in the funeral industry and the factors driving its importance
- Practical strategies to improve resource efficiency by reducing waste, conserving energy and water, and incorporating sustainable design in funeral homes
- Methods for working with suppliers and industry partners to promote ethical sourcing, responsible procurement, and local sustainability initiatives
- Environmentally responsible funeral choices, including natural burials and emerging technologies for low-emission cremation alternatives.
- Approaches for engaging with families and communities on sustainable funeral options while addressing environmental concerns with sensitivity and care

By adopting sustainable practices, funeral professionals can reduce costs, meet evolving consumer expectations, and contribute to a more environmentally responsible future for the industry.

Acknowledgement of county

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians whose ancestral lands we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect their deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people have to Country. We extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their nations in South Australia and across Australia.

Contents

Outlined here is the structure of the guide, including a brief description of what is included in each section.

Section 1: Overview

Understanding sustainability

In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as:

> *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*

Sustainability is about making thoughtful, responsible decisions today that contribute to the wellbeing of future generations. For the funeral industry, this means honouring both people and the planet through practices that are environmentally conscious, socially responsible, and economically viable.

Sustainability is built on three interconnected pillars – environmental, social and economic which together provide a framework for creating a more balanced and resilient future.

Environmental sustainability

Focuses on protecting natural ecosystems, reducing pollution, conversing resources, and mitigating climate change to ensure the planet can support future generations. Outlined below are a few key steps that funeral service providers can implement to pursue environmental sustainability. This guide focuses on environmental sustainability, and each are discussed in more detail throughout the guide.

- **Avoid/reduce waste**: implement circular economy practices, reduce packaging and ensure products are recycled.
- **Improve resource (energy, water, materials) efficiency**: using less resources while maintaining the same level of service and quality.
- **Lower emissions**: reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy, transport, operations and supply chains.
- **Choose sustainable materials and products**: source raw materials that are compostable, untreated, recyclable and produced vis sustainable practices.
- **Protect biodiversity**: support nature friendly operations and supply chains.

Social sustainability

Emphasises equity, human rights, community well-being and access to essential services such as education, healthcare and safe working conditions. Outlined below are a few key steps that funeral service providers can implement to pursue corporate social sustainability.

- **Ensure fair wages and safe working conditions**: provide employees with fair pay, benefits and a safe and respectful work environment.
- **Uphold human rights in the supply chain**: ensure suppliers abide by ethical labour practices and eliminate modern slavery, child labour or exploitative conditions.
- **Engage with local communities**: partner with community groups, support local initiatives and invest (where possible) in social programs that improve community outcomes.
- **Promote diversity, equity and inclusions**: implement inclusive hiring practices and create a culture of belonging.
- **Support employee wellbeing**: offer mental health support, flexible work arrangements and professional development opportunities.

Economic sustainability

Involves promoting responsible growth, innovation and financial stability while ensuring long-term economic well-being without compromising environmental or social health. Outlined below are a few key steps that funeral service providers can implement to pursue economic sustainability.

- **Improve energy and resource efficiency**: as highlighted in the environment section.
- **Invest in long-term planning**: set clear goals and plan for future growth, risk and changing market needs.
- **Use sustainable suppliers**: work with suppliers who offer reliable, ethical and cost-effective products and services.
- **Train and support staff**: build skilled and motivated workforce that helps improve productivity and reduce turnover.
- **Build strong customer relationships**: focus on quality and services to keep customer satisfaction and support stable revenue.

The three pillars of sustainability are closely interconnected, with each one supporting and relying on the others.

True sustainability can only be achieved when all three pillars are considered together.

Outlined below are several key concepts and terms to help funeral service providers understand environmental sustainability and communicate their efforts with confidence.

Resource efficiency

Resource efficiency involves using fewer resources to deliver the same high-quality outcomes. For funeral service providers, this includes:

- Reducing energy and water usage across facilities
- Minimising waste from ceremonial operations and preparation practices
- Choosing service alternatives that reduce resource use

Efficient use of resources supports both environmental and economic sustainability, helping businesses operate responsibly without compromising on service.

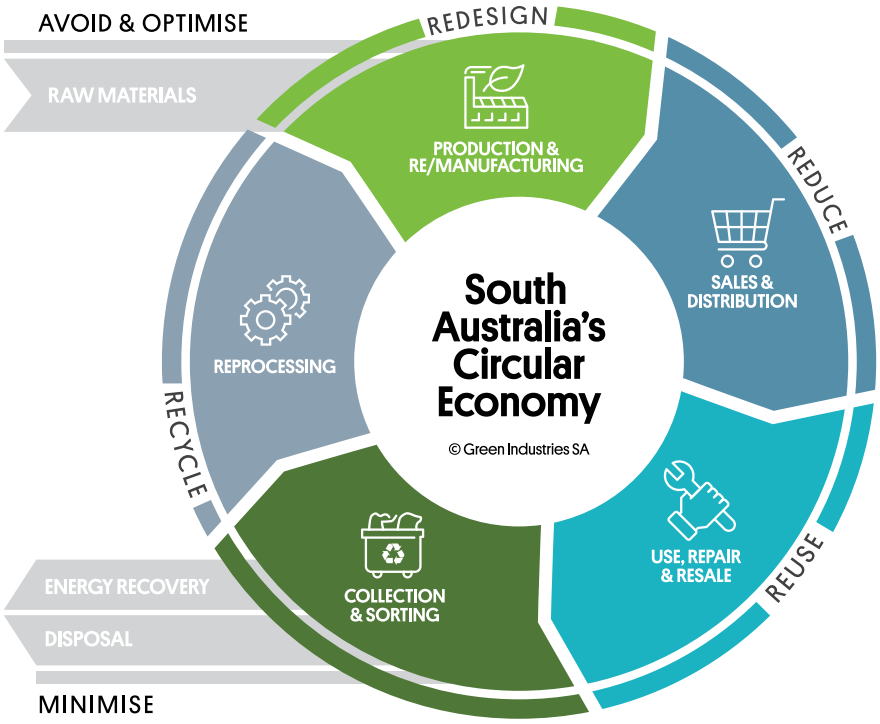
The Circular Economy

The concept of a **circular economy** aims to keep materials and products in use for as long as possible, through reuse, recycling, and repurposing. It moves away from the traditional linear model of "take, make, dispose" and instead promotes a closed-loop system.

In a funeral context, this might involve:

- Partnering with suppliers that offer sustainable, recyclable, or compostable products
- Implementing reusable items in ceremony settings
- Composting floral tributes and food waste where appropriate

Adopting elements of the circular economy can demonstrate leadership in environmental care and offer families more conscious choices.



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GHG emissions, net zero and carbon neutrality

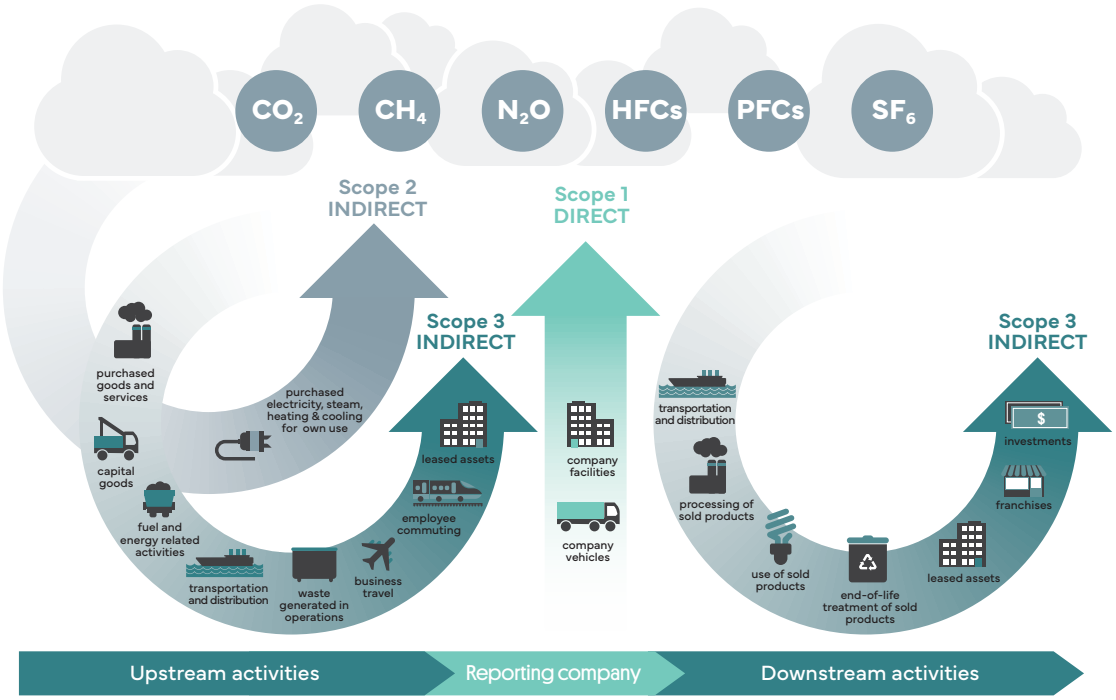
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions refer to the gases released into the atmosphere that trap heat and contribute to global warming and climate change. GHG emissions come from various human activities such as energy use, transportation, agriculture and manufacturing. GHG emissions can be classified into three categories:

Scope 1: Direct Emissions – GHG emissions from sources that are owned or controlled by your company. This includes emissions from fuel combustion in company vehicles and stationary fuel use (e.g. cremators, boilers).

Scope 2: Indirect Emissions from Energy – GHG emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating or cooling consumed by your business. This includes emissions from power plants that produce the electricity you use.

Scope 3: Other indirect Emissions – all other indirect emissions that occur in your businesses value chain, both upstream and downstream. This includes emission from purchased goods and services, waste disposal and business travel.

1 Source: Green Industries SA



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These scopes help businesses identify and measure their full emissions impact. For more information click here.

Net zero and carbon neutrality both refer to achieving a balance between GHG emissions produced and those removed from the atmosphere. While definitions may vary slightly between frameworks, the overarching goal is to ensure that any remaining emissions are offset through credible environmental initiatives. Prioritising emissions reduction at the source is essential and offset projects should supplement, not replace genuine operational changes.

Greenwashing

'Greenwashing' is a term used to describe false or misleading environmental claims. This can include vague claims like "eco-friendly" without proof, using fake or uncertified logos, or exaggerating the sustainability of certain practices. It undermines genuine efforts and can breach consumer law.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) provides great guidance on how to avoid greenwashing click here to learn more.

2 Source: GHG Protocol

Why does sustainability matter to your business?

Embracing sustainability is not only an ethical responsibility, it is also a sound business strategy. Sustainable practices offer measurable benefits that extend well beyond environmental outcomes.

Key benefits of integrating sustainability

Implementing sustainable practices can support your business in a number of meaningful ways:

Cost savings: Reduce expenditure on energy, transport, water, and consumables through more efficient operations

Client engagement: Meet the growing expectations of families who value ethical and environmentally conscious service providers

Risk management: Reduce exposure to supply chain disruptions, resource shortages, or regulatory change

Reputation and trust: Strengthen your standing through transparency and alignment with shared community values

Market access: Position your business to benefit from emerging low-emission services and environmentally preferred products

Policy alignment: Stay ahead of government targets and industry guidelines as Australia moves toward net zero

Navigating the challenges

This guide exists to support funeral directors in taking meaningful, manageable steps toward sustainability. It is not about immediate transformation, but rather continuous improvement at a pace that suits your individual business context.

You are part of a broader shift, one that is supported by government policy, industry bodies, and growing community expectations. National and state sustainability frameworks, such as Australia's Net Zero Strategy and waste reduction targets, are providing the direction, tools, and support systems necessary for small and medium-sized businesses to participate in this transition.

A values-aligned opportunity

Choosing to act on sustainability reflects the core values of the funeral profession: dignity, care, and responsibility across generations. By beginning this journey today, you are helping to ensure that your business not only meets today's needs but also plays a role in shaping a more respectful, resilient, and sustainable future for the communities you serve.

Section 2: Practical sustainability guidance & actions for funeral directors

This is your roadmap to making a tangible difference in the sustainability journey of your business.

THEME 1: Resource efficiency for funeral homes

Improving resource efficiency is a key step in making funeral homes more sustainable. By optimising energy use, reducing waste, conserving water, and adopting renewable energy solutions, funeral providers can improve their environmental sustainability while maintaining a high level of service.

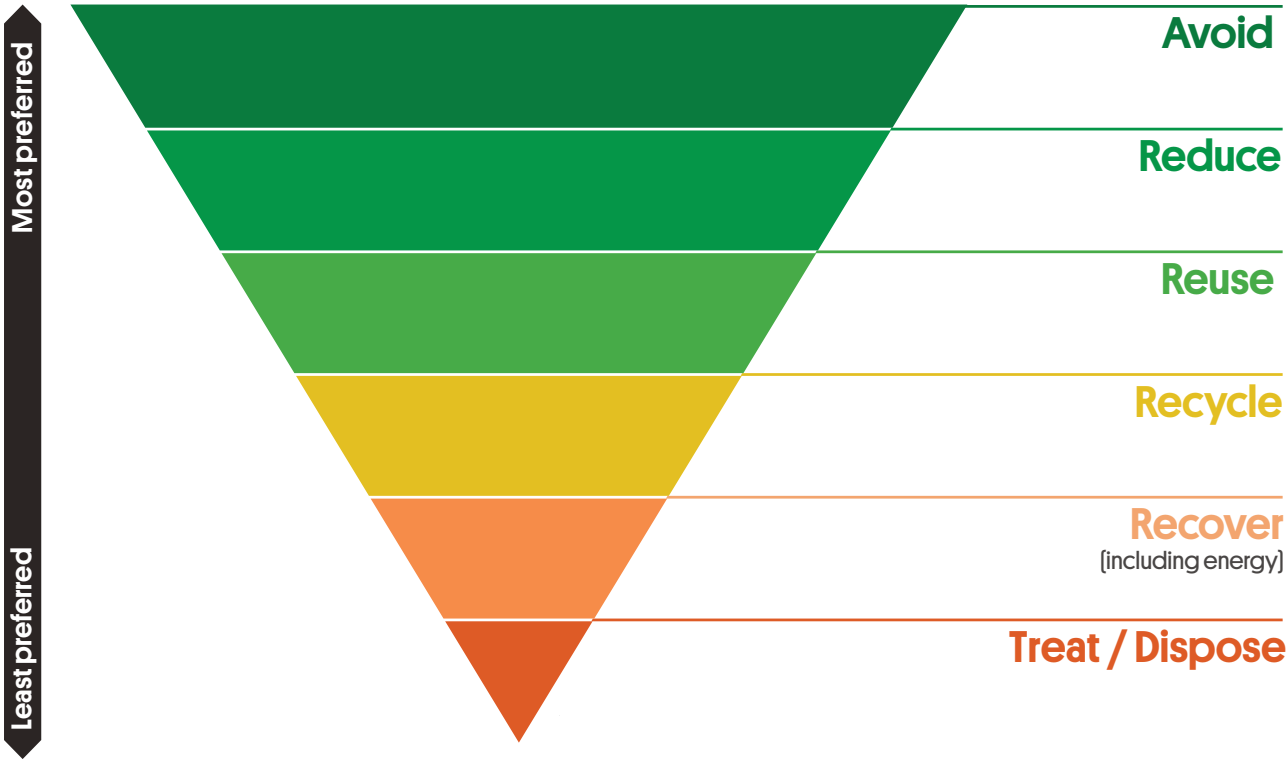
Waste avoidance and reduction

Reducing waste benefits both the environment and your business by lowering costs and improving operational efficiency. By generating less waste, you are using resources more effectively. The waste management hierarchy is one way to guide better decision-making around waste:

- **Avoid** - The best waste is the waste you never create. Buy only what you need and avoid unnecessary single-use items.
- **Reduce** – If waste cannot be avoided, it is crucial to reduce the amount generated. Select products with less packaging and explore digital documentation and communication.
- **Reuse** – Keep materials in use longer, think multiuse crockery and cutlery, battery operated candles and washable tablecloths.
- **Recycle (including compost)** – Segregate and sort your recyclables carefully to ensure materials can be recovered where possible. There are more materials that can be recycled than you think. Organic waste like flowers, food scraps, landscaping maintenance and compostable cutlery and plates can be composted, turning waste into a valuable resource.
- **Recover (including energy)** - Some materials can be used to generate energy such as dry-waste streams.
- **Treat / Dispose** - Landfill is the last resort. It's the most environmentally damaging and should be avoided wherever possible.

Aim to stay as high up the pyramid as possible. It's better for the planet—and often better for business too.

The Waste Management Hierarchy



How can the waste hierarchy be effectively implemented?

The first step is to **avoid** and **reduce** waste generated.

- Consider purchasing non-perishable items in bulk to reduce the amount of packaging waste.
- Look for suppliers that use minimal, reusable or compostable packaging.
- Use inventory management practices for perishable and chemical products to minimise over-ordering and implement First in, First out (FIFO) practices to eliminate out-of-date products needing to be disposed.
- Look to optimise chemical use in preparation and embalming processes. Where chemical use is unavoidable, consider products that use lower toxicity chemicals.
- Consider using digital formats where appropriate for quotes, communications, memorial cards and visitor books. If using physical formats, ensure only the required amount is printed and use recycled paper.
- Optimise food service to minimise food waste when catering. This could include displaying smaller amounts, reducing the top-ups towards the end of service and providing take away containers at the end of the service.
  - » For remaining food waste, consider establishing relationships with food rescue organisations such as OzHarvest or Foodbank.

More information on tackling food waste and other guidance can be found in the following resources:

- GISA's Waste and Recycling Guide for Events and Venues
- End Food Waste Australia: Catering Sector Action Plan

Plastic water bottles at services

Offsite services pose a challenge for providing amenity such as water. Individual water bottles are growing in popularity, but it is important to consider the following for each option.

	Individual water bottles	Water jug(s) and cups
Convenience	Convenient and portable for guests. Easy distribution in larger groups. Higher guest consumption as people take water bottles regardless if they need them at that moment.	Requires monitoring and refilling. Needs to be cleaned for reuse after each service. Guests typically only take water if needed.
Perception	Perceived as hygienic. Could have negative optics for sustainability conscious guests.	Can be perceived as less hygienic. Easier to align with sustainability policies and goals.
Cost	Higher cost per unit.	Lower cost per unit.
Transport and storage	Requires larger storage and transport space.	Easier to transport and store.
Recyclability	Recycling or 10c container collection bin is required with clear signage. Ensure the venue has a recycling or 10c container collection service in place. *Note: if bottles with your brand on them are taken away from the service, there is potential for brand damage if bottles are found discarded in inappropriate places.*	More resource efficient as people typically only take what they need. A green waste bin is required for compostable cup recovery with clear signage or consider using reuseable cups. Ensure the venue has a organics collection service in place.

Once we have avoided and reduced our waste streams, we then need to consider how to **re-use** and **recycle (including composting)** the remaining waste streams:

- Consider the application and longevity of service items such as chapel floral displays, candles and signage to ensure these can be reused.
- Explore options to reuse linen (i.e. tablecloths, chair cover, drapery etc.) such as internally for maintenance cleaning rags, donating to animal shelters or textile recycling.
- Look to repair equipment where possible when within the effective life (typically 10yrs for most equipment). For equipment that is at end-of-life ensure it is recycled as appropriate to its application.
- Select alternatives for single-use plastic items which have been and are proposed for national phase-out. The staging of bans differs between States and Territories, ensure you are aware of the phase-out appropriate to your location.
- Maximise the amount of waste streams that are available in your funeral home.
  - » Ensure bin layout is optimised for staff and customers to easily access and provide signage to direct use.
  - » Adopt signage that aligns with Australian Standard colours (i.e. red for general waste, yellow for co-mingled recycling, green for organics, blue for paper and cardboard and white for 10c containers).

At a minimum, waste and recycling services should include the most common recycling streams and materials banned from landfill. Service and collection points should be available in Metropolitan areas for these waste streams.

- Organics recycling (i.e. flowers, landscaping, food scraps, compostable packaging)
- Co-mingled recycling and/or refundable bottles and cans
- Paper and cardboard recycling
- E-waste recycling
- Printer/toner recycling
- Fluorescent tube lighting
- Hazardous chemicals
- Medical (Contaminated) Waste
- Yellow sharps container
- Battery recycling

To further enhance waste segregation, consider segregation of the following:

- Check if soft plastic collection services are available in your local area.
- Furniture or whitegoods can be reused at other sites, donated or sold. Contact your local not-for-profit organisations to confirm if they accept these items. Donating your furniture not only supports those in need but also promotes sustainability by reducing material sent to landfill.

Case study: Waste management

Ivan Butler Funerals shows how practical, low-cost actions can significantly reduce landfill waste and support better resource recovery. Their approach demonstrates that with a bit of planning, even small changes in daily operations can make a big difference.

- In the kitchen, food scraps are collected in a small compost bin and recycled through the local council's organics collection service.
- Across the site, separate bins are provided for organics, co-mingled recycling, 10c container refunds, general waste, and medical waste, making it easy for staff to sort correctly.
- Floral waste from services is either returned to families or donated to aged care homes, where it is reused in arts and crafts activities.
- Tissues used during services are collected in green bins, helping divert compostable waste from landfill.
- Reusable crockery is also used to avoid single-use items during services.

Together, these actions are supporting a cultural shift within the business. By using composting and separating waste streams, Ivan Butler Funerals is reducing waste to landfill by over 30%, cutting disposal costs and environmental impact.

Energy efficiency

LED lighting and controls

LEDs are currently the most energy efficient option for lighting and are up to 50-60% more efficient than fluorescent tube and halogen lighting. The benefit of LED lighting is not only in the energy savings as they also offer:

- Longer lifespan, reducing maintenance costs, frequency of replacement and waste generated.
- Operate at a lower temperature, therefore reducing heat load on air conditioned and refrigerated spaces.

The consumption pattern of lights is the biggest driver of savings achievable through upgrade. Therefore, prioritise areas with a high usage pattern. These areas typically have a payback between 1-4yrs.

For external lighting, such as carparks, walkways and feature lights consider using solar powered LED lighting. This will eliminate all electricity consumption associated with the fitting.

To further enhance lighting systems, consider the integration of lighting controls:

- Occupancy or motion sensors for infrequently used areas such as bathrooms, storerooms, back-of-house areas and some non-essential external lighting as they minimise energy use when the area is not occupied.
- Daylight sensors and timers for external lighting to ensure lighting is only used when required.

Case study: Lighting upgrade and controls

Taylor and Forgie Funeral Directors have already upgraded most lighting across their sites to LEDs, significantly reducing energy use and maintenance. 8 double fluorescent fittings remain in the main office area. Assuming the lights operate 8 hours per day, this is an energy saving of **300kWh or $120 per year** (based on $0.40/kWh). The business can access the SA REPS program to reduce the overall cost of replacement including the installation costs, delivering a quick return on investment and a more sustainable workplace.

Occupancy sensors are installed in the bathrooms at their new chapel. These controls ensure lights are only on when needed. **Even reducing use by 1hr per day results in cost savings of $26 per year.**

What is REPS? Retailer Energy Productivity Scheme (REPS) is the South Australian Government Energy Productivity Scheme that provides incentives for South Australian households and businesses to save energy. Click here for more information on eligible projects.

Heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC)

Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems often account for a significant portion of a funeral home's overall energy use. Given the need to maintain comfortable and dignified environments for grieving families and staff, these systems are essential. However, they can also be a key area for reducing operational costs and environmental impact.

By implementing both low-cost adjustments and longer-term improvements, funeral homes can enhance comfort, support sustainability goals, and manage utility expenses more effectively.

Prioritising Regular Maintenance

A well-maintained HVAC system performs more efficiently and reliably—both critical factors in a setting where comfort and professionalism are non-negotiable. Key maintenance practices include:

- **Cleaning filters and outdoor coils:** Dust and debris buildup forces systems to work harder, increasing energy consumption. Filters and coils should be cleaned at least twice a year.
- **Inspecting refrigerant levels and insulation:** Ensuring proper refrigerant charge and intact insulation on pipework improves performance and reduces unnecessary energy use.
- **Thermostat calibration and control checks:** Properly calibrated thermostats ensure systems are not over- or under-heating spaces.

Scheduling routine servicing with a licensed HVAC technician can prevent inefficiencies. A simple site walk-through checklist (included in the appendix) can help identify visible maintenance issues.

A poorly maintained HVAC system can use up to 30% more energy than necessary.

Improving Temperature Control and Scheduling

Temperature settings and scheduling play a significant role in managing HVAC-related energy consumption.

- **Recommended set points:** Maintain 20–22°C in winter and 24–26°C in summer. Each degree outside this range can increase energy use by **2–4%**.
- **Smart scheduling:** For areas with defined operating hours, program HVAC systems to activate shortly before the start time and power down after hours.
- **Advanced control systems:** Investing in building management systems (BMS) or smart thermostats allows for more granular control, automated scheduling, and zone-based temperature regulation.

Consult your technician to assess potential control system upgrades suitable for your specific site and operation.

System Replacement and Efficiency Upgrades

In some cases, upgrading the HVAC system entirely is the most effective solution, particularly where older or inefficient units are in place.

Consider replacing your HVAC system if:

- The system is more than **10 years old.**
- Your facilities are undergoing expansion or a major refurbishment.
- Your equipment is running phased-out refrigerants such as R22. More information on refrigerants can be found here.
- The system shows signs of wear, inefficiency, or physical deterioration.

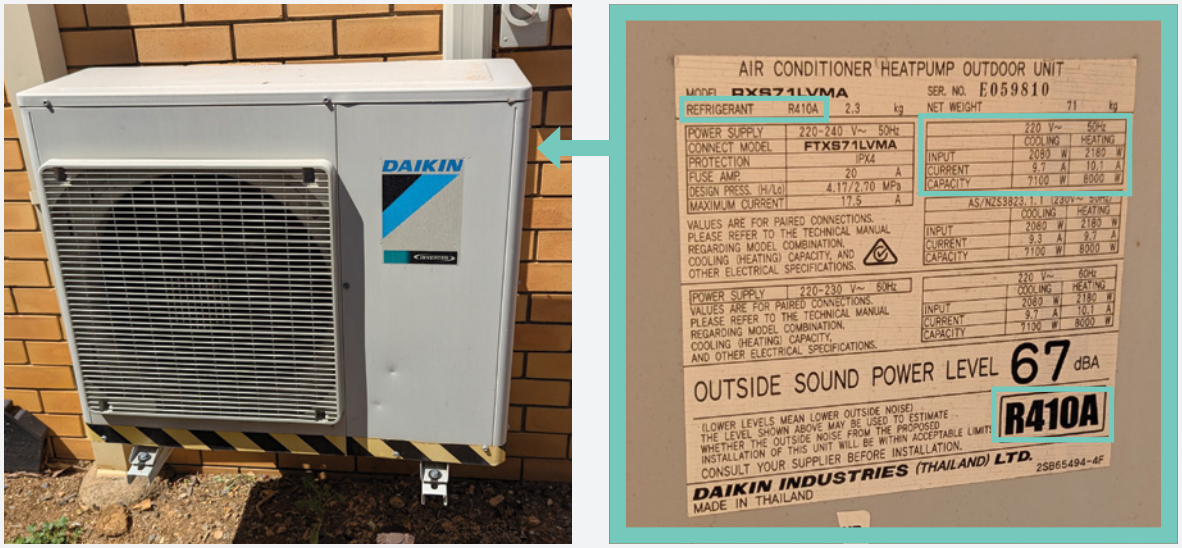
Modern high-efficiency HVAC units offer **20–40% greater efficiency** compared to legacy systems. Use the new Zoned Energy Rating Label (ZERL) to assist in selecting the most efficient system for your operations. Click here for information on how to read a ZERL. While the upfront cost is higher, the return on investment is typically realised within the system's operational lifespan.

Case study: Air conditioning upgrade

At Ivan Butler Funerals, a small office split-system air conditioner was identified for an upgrade due to its lower Coefficient of Performance (COP), indicating high energy consumption. Replacing it with a newer model featuring a higher COP can significantly lower energy use. For example, upgrading from a unit with a COP of 2.5 to one with a COP of 4.0 can **reduce energy consumption by around 40%** for the same heating or cooling output. Each hour of operation is a reduction in cost of 62c, which adds up quickly over the year.

Ivan Butler now plans to apply this approach more broadly, using COP values and ZERL to guide future replacements as systems approach end-of-life.

Tip: How to identify the COP of your systems



1. Locate the nameplate on the outdoor unit — typically found on one of the four external panels.
2. Identify the input power rating, listed in watts (W) or kilowatts (kW). In the example shown, the input is 2080 W (for cooling).
3. Find the cooling or heating capacity, also shown on the nameplate. In this case, it is 7100 W for cooling.
4. Calculate the COP by dividing the capacity by the input:

$$\text{COP} = \frac{7100\ \text{W}}{2080\ \text{W}} = 3.41$$

A higher COP indicates a more energy-efficient system. Newer high-efficiency air conditioners typically have COP values ranging from 4 to 6.

The type of refrigerant used also plays a critical role in environmental impact. For instance, R410a (hydrofluorocarbon) has a high Global Warming Potential (GWP). Modern systems increasingly use R32, which offers higher energy efficiency and significantly lower GWP compared to older refrigerants.

Speak to your HVAC contractor about best-practice features such as:

- Variable-speed fans and compressors
- Electronic expansion valves
- Intelligent controls and zoning capabilities
- Natural or low-GWP refrigerant options

Tip: In areas where there is active heating or cooling, minimise the time that doors, shutters and windows are open as this leads to heat loss/ingress which causes equipment to work harder and consume more energy.

Simple signage to remind people to close the door can lead to significant savings.

Hot water

Hot water systems are a necessary component of funeral home operations, supporting a range of functions from preparation areas to amenities for staff and guests. Ensuring these systems operate efficiently not only reduces operational costs but also aligns with broader sustainability commitments.

While hot water use may not be the largest contributor to energy consumption, it presents a practical and achievable opportunity for efficiency improvements.

Importance of Maintenance and Insulation

Regular servicing of your hot water system is essential to ensure reliable operation and prevent energy waste. A poorly maintained system is more likely to underperform, increasing energy costs and shortening equipment life.

In addition to servicing, insulating pipes can significantly reduce heat loss, especially in colder climates. Without insulation, exposed pipework can result in energy losses of up to **3.5 kWh per day**, potentially adding **$1 or more per day** to your energy bills.

Temperature Setpoints: Balancing Safety and Efficiency

Adjusting the thermostat settings of your hot water system can lower energy consumption. However, changes must be made carefully to meet safety standards and operational needs.

- **Storage systems** must be set to **at least 60°C** to prevent the growth of Legionella bacteria.
- **Continuous flow systems** can generally be set as low as **50°C**, offering energy savings.

Before adjusting setpoints, consult your licensed plumber to confirm compatibility with all equipment—particularly washers or other appliances that may require higher water temperatures.

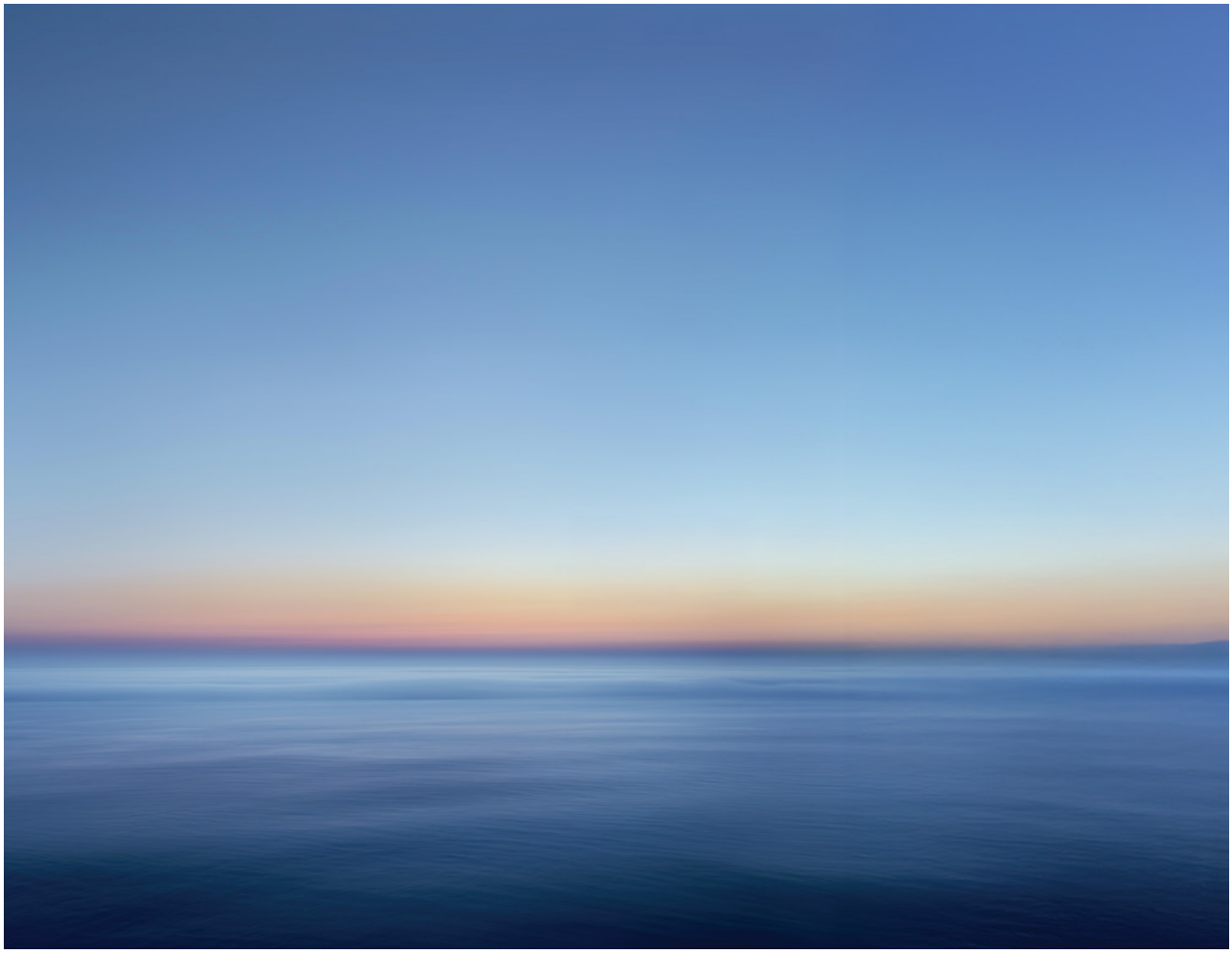
Assessing System Upgrades

If your hot water system is nearing the end of its expected life (typically 10–15 years for storage tanks and 15–20 years for continuous flow systems), it may be time to consider a more efficient replacement.

Considerations for upgrading your system:

- **From electric storage units to heat pump systems:** Heat pumps use up to **70% less energy** than traditional electric systems and are a strong choice for funeral homes seeking lower emissions and reduced energy bills.
- **For aged gas continuous flow systems:** Replacing units over 10 years old with a **high-efficiency model** can yield measurable savings.
- **Moving away from gas entirely:** For funeral homes with net zero or 100% renewable energy goals, electrifying hot water systems by installing hot water heat pumps is an important step in reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Coupling this with a rooftop solar system can be a very effective solution.
- **Exploring solar integration:** If your site has available roof space, a **solar hot water system** may complement your existing setup. These systems are durable, low-maintenance, and can operate efficiently for many years.

Note: Some regions have already phased out electric resistance storage systems for domestic use. Commercial facilities are encouraged to consider similar transitions.



Refrigeration

Refrigeration is a critical component of funeral home operations, playing a central role in the dignified care and preservation of human remains. Whether operating a small independent funeral home or a large mortuary facility, effective refrigeration is essential for maintaining legal compliance, protecting public health, and upholding professional standards.

Well-maintained systems support operational continuity and reduce costs through improved energy efficiency and equipment longevity. The good news? Enhancing refrigeration efficiency does not always require significant capital expenditure. Many improvements stem from good housekeeping, scheduled maintenance, and informed staff practices.

In most funeral care settings, refrigeration falls into two primary categories:

- **Walk-in Cool Rooms** – Larger capacity cold rooms designed for high-volume or longer-term storage, often located in central facilities or regional hubs.
- **Storage Refrigeration Units** – These include upright mortuary fridges and individual body chambers, typically located in preparation areas or smaller facilities.

Regardless of size or type, the principles of energy-efficient operation remain the same. Below are practical, cost-effective strategies to keep refrigeration systems functioning efficiently and reliably.

Initiative	Recommended Action	Estimated Energy Impact
Set Appropriate Temperatures	Maintain units at the highest safe temperature permitted for body preservation. Typically +2- 6°C.	2–4% reduction in energy use per degree adjusted
Clean Coils and Filters	Clean condenser and evaporator coils at least twice annually, or more frequently in dusty environments.	Up to 10% energy savings
Upgrade to LED Lighting	Replace traditional lighting with LED alternatives inside fridges or cold rooms. LEDs emit less heat and consume less power.	40–50% savings on lighting + 5% fridge savings
Inspect and Maintain Door Seals	Regularly clean door gaskets and replace them if cracked, warped, or no longer sealing effectively.	Up to 5% energy savings
Ensure Proper Ventilation	Avoid blocking ventilation grills or surrounding areas. Allow space around equipment for adequate airflow.	Up to 20% increase in efficiency
Install air curtain	Fit air curtains retain cool air during door openings.	5–10% energy reduction depending on usage
Schedule Regular Maintenance	Conduct routine servicing to calibrate thermostats, review settings, check refrigerant charge, and inspect components.	Up to 20% energy savings + longer system life

If refrigeration systems are more than 10 years old, or rely on outdated refrigerants such as R22, upgrading may provide both environmental and economic benefits. When evaluating replacement systems, look for features such as:

- Variable-speed compressors
- Electronically commutated (EC) fans
- Smart defrost and temperature controls
- Natural refrigerants (e.g., CO_2, propane)
- Electronic expansion valves
- Alarm and fault detection systems

These technologies support regulatory compliance and can significantly reduce long-term operating costs.

Tip: Ask your refrigeration contractor about energy rating labels and best-practice tech

Case study: Refrigeration efficiency

During a walkthrough at Blackwell Funerals, a significant source of energy loss was identified: the mortuary coolroom is frequently accessed. While strip curtains were initially considered, they were found to be unsuitable due to workflow demands and the need to maintain dignity in mortuary areas.

As an alternative, air curtains present a more practical solution. These systems form a high-velocity air barrier that limits heat transfer, helping to reduce cold air loss from the coolroom while maintaining operational efficiency and respecting the space's sensitive use. **Energy savings of up to 700kWh or $280 per year** based on $0.40/kWh could be achieved with a payback of ~10yrs.

Energy management

Effectively managing energy use is one of the most impactful ways to reduce operating costs and environmental impact. A proactive energy management strategy not only supports sustainability goals but also fosters a culture of efficiency and continuous improvement.

Choose Efficient Appliances

Select energy-efficient appliances and equipment for offices, kitchens, and chapels. Prioritise appliances with high energy ratings under the GEMS (Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards) scheme, which ensures products meet minimum energy performance requirements and provides clear labelling to compare efficiency.

When purchasing or upgrading equipment, consider:

- **Office equipment** – opt for computers, monitors, printers, and lighting with high energy star or GEMS ratings.
- **Kitchens** – choose fridges, dishwashers, ovens, and hot water systems designed for low energy consumption and standby performance.
- **Chapels and shared spaces** – look for efficient sound systems, projectors, lighting, and climate control units.

Purchasing decisions should also factor in total life-cycle cost (including energy use), not just the upfront cost. Wherever possible, select equipment with features that support automation, scheduling, and low-power modes.

Case study: Selecting energy efficient equipment

Taylor & Forgie Funeral Directors recently installed a 5-star energy-rated fridge in one of their chapel kitchens. In contrast, operating an older standard domestic fridge can consume up to twice as much energy.

Upgrading to a high-efficiency fridge can save 100-200kWh per year, equating to about $40-$80 annually per fridge. While the savings per unit may seem small, the benefits compound over time and scale with multiple appliances across sites.

A useful tool for selecting energy efficient appliances is the Energy Rating Calculator, click here to learn more!

Implement Smart Controls and Monitoring Systems

Smart controls and energy monitoring systems are vital tools for optimising energy use. These systems help track real-time consumption, identify inefficiencies, and automate control over lighting, heating, and cooling. Suggested steps include:

- Install sub-metering or circuit-level monitoring to track where and when energy is being used.
- Develop a demand management strategy, especially if you're on demand-based tariffs. Strategically planning equipment startup and shutdown can help avoid peak charges and reduce contract demand risk.
- Use dashboards or visual tools (e.g., display screens or noticeboards) to share energy performance data with staff. Regular updates help build awareness and support behaviour change.
- If you have a solar system, ensure monitoring is set-up by your contractor so you can access the generation data from the system. This assists in monitoring the performance of the system and identifying any issues with the system.

Note: All newer inverters come with a cloud-based monitoring system.

A Building Management System (BMS) is an intelligent control system that can significantly enhance energy efficiency by automating equipment scheduling, monitoring consumption in real time, and optimising demand to avoid peak charges. It also provides visual dashboards and alerts that support staff engagement and continuous improvement. Integrating a BMS is especially valuable for larger or more complex sites where energy use varies across zones or equipment types.

Track and Analyse Energy Consumption

Having a structured system to track and report on energy usage is essential for identifying trends, detecting anomalies, and evaluating savings. This could include:

- Creating a baseline energy use profile as a reference point for performance tracking.
- Recording monthly or quarterly consumption data and comparing it to targets.
- Analysing patterns to uncover opportunities for improvement—such as unnecessary after-hours energy use or seasonal spikes.

Tip: simple spreadsheet or digital monitoring tool can be used to track this information.

Engage and Train Staff

Staff behaviour has a significant impact on energy outcomes. Embedding energy awareness into the workplace culture helps ensure systems are used efficiently and issues are addressed early. Recommendations:

- Hold regular energy efficiency sessions during team meetings or training days.
- Share updates on energy performance, celebrate achievements, and invite ideas from staff.
- Include preventative maintenance checks in training—for example:
  - Checking seals on refrigeration doors
  - Inspecting hot water line insulation
  - Reporting any leaking water fixtures

These small steps, when implemented collectively, can drive substantial savings and improvements over time.

Case study: Resource management

During a site walkthrough at Blackwell Funerals, staff identified and promptly repaired a compressed air leak, avoiding an estimated loss of 500-1,000 kWh per year, which is typical for even small leaks. The site follows a detailed maintenance checklist covering hygiene, safety, equipment upkeep, and environmental compliance, reflecting industry best practice. Regular walkthroughs enable early detection of issues, supporting system reliability and reducing energy waste, reflecting an example of best practice in proactive resource management.

Refer to the Appendix for a site walkthrough checklist.

Water efficiency & resilience

Water is a vital resource that supports a wide range of activities within funeral home operations, from body preparation and cleaning to guest amenities and garden maintenance. Improving water efficiency not only contributes to environmental stewardship but also supports long-term cost savings and operational resilience.

Maintenance and Leak Detection

Undetected leaks can result in significant water loss over time. For example, a tap leaking just one drop per second can waste over **7,000 litres per year**, enough to significantly increase utility costs.

Common areas for leaks include:

- Taps, toilets, shower heads, and piping joints
- Hose nozzles and shut-off valves
- Garden irrigation points

Implementing a routine inspection schedule can help identify and resolve small issues before they escalate. Encourage staff to report leaks promptly, and ensure maintenance staff or contractors are aware of priority areas to monitor.

Upgrade to Efficient Fixtures and Appliances

Upgrading outdated fixtures and appliances is a highly effective way to improve water performance and reduce utility costs, especially where hot water is involved (as this also cuts energy use).

Australia's Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) scheme provides an easy way to compare product efficiency. The more stars, the more water-efficient the product.

Tip: run your finger under your tap, if you feel a grid the tap has an aerator installed

Recommended upgrades include:

- **Low-flow taps and aerators** – Can reduce water use from 15–18L/min to just 2L/min without compromising performance.
- **Dual flush toilets** – Standard in new builds, but valuable as retrofits. These significantly reduce flushing water volumes.
- **Pre-rinse spray valves** – For any catering or kitchen areas, these can reduce flow rates by over 60%.
- **Efficient dishwashers** – Modern commercial models use significantly less water and energy.

Case study: Water fixtures

As part of efficiency improvements, Ivan Butler Funerals upgraded an older **single-flush toilet** to a **dual-flush model** in the chapel area. Dual-flush toilets typically **4.5 to 6 litres for full flushes** and just **3 litres for half-flushes**, compared to 9 to 12 litres in some older single flush units. This can cut toilet water use by **up to 60%** per flush.

They also installed **tap aerators**, reducing flow rates to about **5 to 7 L/min** without affecting user experience. This is a simple retrofit that can cut basin water use nearly in half.

Outdoor Water Use and Landscape Management

Gardens are integral to the identity and function of many funeral homes. Ensuring their upkeep doesn't come at a high environmental cost is essential.

Practical water-wise strategies:

- Install drip irrigation systems to deliver water directly to plant roots.
- Select drought-tolerant native species that require minimal watering once established.
- Harvest rainwater using storage tanks for use in landscaping and non-potable cleaning tasks.
- Schedule irrigation during cooler times (early morning or late evening) to reduce evaporation losses.

Incorporating water efficiency into your funeral home's operational plan supports sustainability, reduces running costs, and demonstrates leadership in environmental responsibility. Whether through simple behaviour changes, scheduled maintenance, or upgraded infrastructure, every step contributes to a more resilient business and a more sustainable community.

Sustainable design and fit-outs

The **building envelope**—or building "fabric"—is the outer shell of a structure, encompassing the roof, walls, floors, windows, doors, insulation, and air sealing. It serves as a critical barrier between the controlled indoor environment and the outdoor climate. For funeral homes, where maintaining a serene, comfortable, and respectful setting is paramount, improving the building envelope is a powerful way to lower energy costs, enhance indoor comfort, and align with sustainability goals.

Older facilities built to legacy standards often lack modern insulation or airtightness, resulting in substantial heat loss during winter and heat gain during summer. This not only drives up energy consumption but can also compromise the indoor atmosphere, especially in sensitive spaces like chapels, viewing rooms, and family lounges.

Improving the building fabric delivers key benefits:

- Reduces heating and cooling energy use
- Enhances thermal and acoustic comfort for guests and staff
- Supports dignified, tranquil environments for services
- Contributes to long-term cost savings and environmental targets

Key Strategies for Enhancing the Building Envelope

Insulation and Draught-Proofing

Upgrading insulation in ceilings, walls, and under floors helps stabilise indoor temperatures and reduce reliance on HVAC systems. Addressing air leaks, through doors, windows, vents, and pipe penetrations is equally important, as uncontrolled draughts can increase energy demand and disrupt indoor comfort.

Consider the following:

- Install or upgrade ceiling and wall insulation during renovations
- Seal gaps around windows, doors, skirting boards, and exhaust fans
- Use door closers and weather stripping in high-use areas

Window Glazing and Shading

Windows can account for significant heat transfer in funeral homes. Installing double glazing or low-emissivity coatings improves insulation while reducing external noise, supporting both energy efficiency and peace inside service areas. In warmer months, use external shading devices such as blinds, louvres, or awnings to reduce solar heat gain and glare. Window tinting or films also provide a cost-effective enhancement.

Designing for Natural Light and Ventilation

Maximising natural daylight and passive ventilation not only reduces reliance on artificial lighting and mechanical cooling but also enhances the ambience of the space. Where appropriate, consider:

- Installing skylights or clerestory windows in communal areas
- Orienting spaces to capture prevailing breezes or morning light
- Using operable windows and cross-ventilation to maintain air quality

These design principles can contribute to a healthier and more uplifting environment, beneficial for both guests and staff, while reducing operational energy use.

Using Sustainable and Healthy Building Materials

Funeral homes undertaking refurbishments or fit-outs are encouraged to specify sustainably sourced, non-toxic materials. Doing so supports environmental outcomes and ensures healthier indoor air quality.

Preferred materials include:

- FSC- or PEFC-certified timber for joinery and finishes
- Recycled or reclaimed materials where appropriate
- Low-VOC paints, adhesives, and finishes to minimise harmful emissions

While these enhancements are most cost-effective when integrated into new builds, many can be introduced gradually during planned maintenance or staged upgrades. Take advantage of any renovations to review insulation, glazing, ventilation, and material choices.

Case study: Designing for resource efficiency

Taylor & Forgie Funeral Director's newly constructed chapel was designed with guest comfort and energy efficiency as priorities. The building features double glazing, ceiling insulation, and a fully electric fit-out—including induction cooktops and electric hot water. It also incorporates central air conditioning controls, dimmable LED lighting, and occupancy sensors to optimise energy use.

In contrast to the older chapel, which relies on mixed fuel systems and has limited insulation, the new facility demonstrates significant performance improvements. With comparable size and capacity, the **new site consumes around 40% less energy per day**, even with more frequent use. This reduction is the result of features such as a high-performance thermal envelope, efficient appliances, and smart energy controls.

Additional benefits, including improved sound insulation and enhanced indoor comfort, further support the chapel's performance. This example demonstrates how integrated design and technology choices

When undertaking refurbishment consider donating and recycling items that are used but in good condition, such as furniture, building material, appliances and whitegoods.

Renewable energy, transport and equipment alternatives

Onsite renewable energy

Incorporating renewable energy into your funeral home's operations can help reduce environmental impact, lower energy costs, and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability that resonates with modern families. If your business has set goals like achieving net zero emissions, renewable energy is likely to be a key part of your strategy. This can include installing solar on your premises or purchasing certified renewable electricity such as GreenPower® through your energy retailer.

Installing solar

Electricity costs make-up a significant portion of operational costs and installing a solar PV system can assist in reducing this expense. The potential savings are unique to your operations, however systems typically have a return on investment between 4-7yrs.

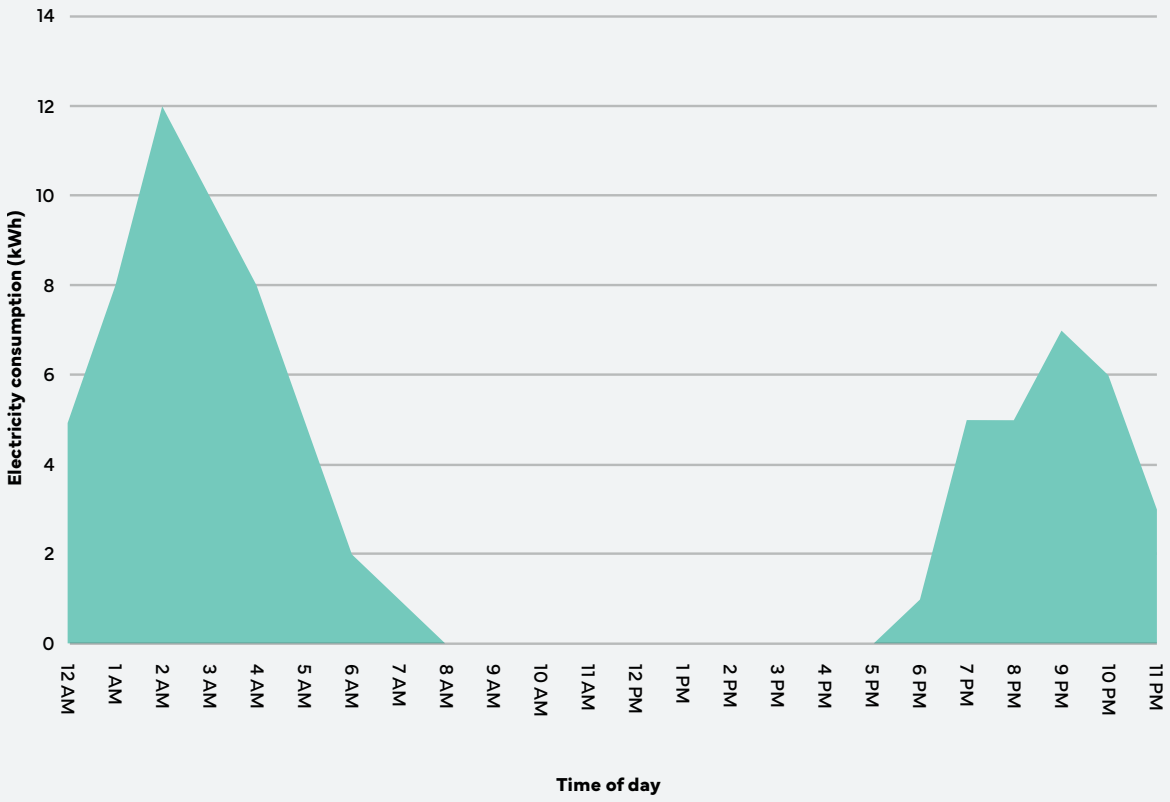
There are several factors that will impact the overall savings achieved from a solar system:

- Electricity price: the cost of electricity changes depending on your location and volume of consumption

- Electricity consumption profile: Solar systems generate electricity during the day, therefore the more electricity you use during the day the more you will be able to offset directly. If the majority of your consumption is in the evenings, consider installing battery storage to support consumption outside of daylight hours
- System size: It is important to appropriately size your solar system to maximise 'self-consumption' and avoid oversizing, which may reduce your return-on-investment. If you have significant roof space, consider the integration of battery storage to capture excess generation for evening use.
- Roof space: The most common form of solar installations occurs on roof tops. However, depending on the orientation, tilt, shading and asbestos not all your roof space may be viable for installation reducing overall system size. If, you have limited roof space consider options such as car park solar structures. This can also support electric vehicle charging for your fleet and customers.

Case study: Renewable energy

Riverland Funerals has invested in solar PV systems across its sites, eliminating almost all daytime energy consumption and exporting excess during periods of low site activity. These systems can generate over 50,000 kWh per year, offsetting more than $12,000 in grid electricity (at $0.34/kWh).



Electric vehicles

Funeral homes operate a variety of vehicles, hearses, general purpose vehicles and maintenance vehicles. Transitioning to electric vehicles supports decarbonisation goals, can appeal to customers seeking a green or natural burial and have lower noise levels over traditional vehicles.

Barriers for uptake	Solutions
Higher upfront cost to a traditional vehicle	Review the whole-of-life operating costs for the vehicle, this often outweighs the higher upfront capital Some State governments provide incentives for businesses to transition fleet vehicles to EV
Limited models available that meet the requirements of the funeral industry	Start transitioning vehicles where there are common models available (i.e. utility vans, general purpose vehicles, lawn mowers). As demand continues to grow for electric vehicles more models will become available for bespoke operations (i.e. hearses) Explore options for custom conversions for hearses as the market in Australia is not yet established.
Driving distance and charging downtime	Investigate the maximum driving distance of your vehicles and select models appropriate to your driving distance to minimise range anxiety Implement a fleet charging schedule to ensure vehicles are always charged for when they are required.

Things to consider when transitioning to electric vehicles

- Review your electrical infrastructure capacity. Depending on the EV charger, you could require up to 32A three-phase power to support a single EV charger.
- Where are the vehicles currently stored? Does this area have an electrical supply point that can support EV charging?
- Will you offer EV charging for customers in your carpark?

Case study: Electric vehicles

Taylor & Forgie Funeral Directors have taken proactive steps toward fleet decarbonisation by purchasing two electric vehicles: a Hyundai IONIQ (used for general operations) and a Ford EV van (used for transfers).

Compared to equivalent petrol models, each EV could save 1.5-2 tonnes of CO_2 annually and reduce fuel costs by $1,000-$1,500 per vehicle per year, depending on usage patterns and electricity tariffs. Their early adoption provides a practical model for other businesses looking to reduce transport emissions.

Additionally, if you have solar PV installed at your facility consider charging your vehicles during the day to soak up any excess generation, rather than exporting to the grid. The more generation you use onsite the quicker your return on investment.

Renewable energy purchasing

In front of the meter renewable energy purchasing is a mechanism that allows businesses to purchase renewable energy that is generated from offsite renewable sources such as solar or wind farms. There are three common options available to businesses:

- GreenPower: is a government accredited retail product that most electricity retailers offer. For each unit of GreenPower sold, an equivalent renewable energy certificate is voluntarily surrendered on behalf of the customer. This product can be easily integrated into your existing electricity contract, however, comes at a premium.
- Large-scale Generation Certificate (LGCs): Businesses can purchase LGCs independently to match your consumption. LGCs can be linked to a particular renewable project or purchased through the market. LGCs are typically lower cost than GreenPower, however still an additional cost to your electricity contract.
- Sleeved/virtual Power Purchase Agreement (PPA): A long-term contract with a renewable energy project(s) to buy electricity and LGCs matched to your business's consumption. These contracts take time to establish but typically offer lower electricity rates over a traditional contract.

Each option has its strengths and weaknesses, and it is important to align your purchasing strategy with the overall objectives of your business. These options are particularly applicable if you are looking to reduce your emissions and/or have a renewable energy target.

Similarly for purchasing natural gas and LPG, many retailers offer carbon neutral products, which include your gas supply, automatic purchase and retirement of certified offsets which is often a premium added to the gas price.

Case study: Alternative strategies for emission offsetting

To reduce emissions from crematorium operations, Riverland Funerals has opted for carbon-neutral LPG procurement, which is a low-barrier and immediate solution to support climate goals where renewable energy isn't yet viable. This choice reflects a simpler and more practical approach in the short term, towards decarbonising gas consumption.

Similarly, renewable electricity can also be sourced from your retailer to cover consumption outside solar generation hours.

To learn more these types of options, contact your energy retailer to explore GreenPower or carbon-neutral electricity alternatives and their associated costs.

THEME 2:
Working with suppliers & partners on sustainability

Sustainability in funeral homes isn't just about what happens on site, it also involves the suppliers and partners you choose to work with. From coffins and flowers to transport and cremation services, every link in your supply chain has the potential to contribute to a more ethical and environmentally conscious operation. By working with responsible businesses, setting clear standards, and making thoughtful procurement decisions, funeral homes can reduce their carbon footprint, support ethical industries, and offer families sustainable options they can feel good about.

Offering sustainable product & service options

When reviewing products, it is important to understand the different terms used.

	Term	Definition
MORE SUSTAINABLE ▲	Compostable*	A material that breaks down into nutrient-rich organic matter under specific conditions (e.g., temperature, moisture, and microorganisms) and improves soil health.
	Untreated solid timber	Natural wood that has not undergone any chemical or physical treatment
	Biodegradable**	A material (e.g., wool, cotton) that can be broken down by microorganisms into water, carbon dioxide, and biomass over time.
	Treated solid timber	Natural wood that has been chemically or physically treated (e.g. with preservatives or coatings)
	Untreated particle board	Engineered wood product without added chemical treatments
	Treated particle board	Engineered wood product made from wood particles bonded with adhesives, and treated with chemicals

** If a bioplastic or coated product is promoted as 'compostable' ensure it is certified to Australian Standards AS4736 (commercial composting) or AS5810 (home composting). These materials must be composted according to the Australian Standard that they are certified to fully break down.*

*** Take caution when a product is promoted as 'biodegradable'. Note that degradable is not the same as biodegradable. Some plastic products are advertised as degradable but are incapable of being decomposed by microorganisms and will only break down into microplastics, which is harmful for the environment.*

Coffins & Urns: Prioritise products made from FSC-certified timber, natural materials (e.g., wicker, bamboo, wool), or recycled components. Avoid synthetic finishes or hardware that may inhibit biodegradation. While cardboard coffins may seem like a sustainable option to families, to meet structural integrity requirements they are treated with chemicals to increase strength which takes longer to breakdown and can generate ash residue during cremation.

Transport Services: Work with local providers who offer electric or hybrid vehicles. Plan schedules efficiently to reduce trips and fuel use.

Paper & Stationery: Offer digital service booklets, tributes, or memorial cards as an alternative to traditional printing. Use 100% recycled or FSC-certified paper when printing is required and print locally to reduce transport impacts.

Flowers: Choose locally grown, seasonal flowers that are free of pesticides and arrive without plastic wrapping or floral foam. Encourage families to repurpose arrangements after the service or donate them to aged care homes or hospitals.

By providing these alternatives and clearly explaining their benefits, funeral homes empower families to make more informed and responsible choices during a difficult time.

Choosing and working with sustainable suppliers

The environmental and social impacts of the products and services you offer often trace back to how, and by whom, they're made. Building relationships with suppliers who share your values helps create a more consistent and credible approach to sustainability.

Here are some useful questions to guide supplier conversations:

Materials & packaging

- Is the product made from renewable, recycled, or compostable materials?
- Is the packaging **reusable, recyclable, or compostable** — and clearly labelled as such?

Production methods & certifications

- Are production methods energy-efficient, low-waste, or circular in nature (e.g. reuse, repair, remanufacturing)?
- Does the supplier hold any third-party certifications like FSC, Fair Trade, ISO 14001, or Australian Certified Organic?

Local sourcing & emissions

- Is the product made locally, or at least within the region?
- How is it transported, and can emissions be reduced through consolidated deliveries?

Transparency & collaboration

- Can the supplier provide details about where and how products are made?
- Are they open to working together on improving sustainability outcomes?

Even if a supplier isn't perfect, showing a willingness to improve can be a strong foundation for long-term collaboration. Asking these questions also strengthens relationships, builds trust, and helps you share a more compelling sustainability story with your clients.

Case study: Circular economy

Ivan Butler Funerals sources candles for the Chapel from a local candle supplier. Candles are contained in a glass jar, once the candle is finished the glass jar is cleaned, returned to the supplier and refilled.

This simple circular model supports local business, saves on procurement and disposal costs, and sets a strong example of how thoughtful procurement can support environmental and economic sustainability.

A simple win-win situation.

Partnering within the industry

Beyond your immediate suppliers, other funeral sector partners can play a vital role in delivering greener services:

- Cemeteries that offer natural burials (as defined) or more natural burials with minimal chemical or material inputs.
- Crematoriums implementing energy-efficient technologies or renewable power systems.
- Florists , transport providers, and stationers who prioritise local sourcing and low-impact operations.

Collaborating with these stakeholders and even co-developing ‘green funeral packages’ helps normalise more sustainable options within the industry. It also ensures that your efforts are not isolated, but part of a broader shift toward environmentally responsible care.

Case study: Metals recovery and recycling

Both Riverland Funerals and Taylor & Forgie Funeral Directors participate in a post-cremation metals recycling program. Orthopaedic implants and other metal fragments are collected magnetically after cremation and sent overseas for processing and reuse. The program is facilitated through OrthoMetals, a Netherlands-based company that specialises in recycling metals recovered from crematoriums worldwide.

In addition to metals, Pacemakers, once destined for destruction through high-temperature incineration, are now being collected separately by OrthoMetals and sent to the UK for refurbishment and reuse in humanitarian medical programs. Some manufacturers are also starting to accept returns.

While not always visible to families, these processes ensure valuable metals and products are re-used and recycled. Any proceeds are returned to the crematorium and are then donated to local charities like hospital research, reinforcing the social and environmental value of these initiatives.

Collaborating for meaningful impact

Engage with your suppliers and downstream supply chain as there are likely initiatives that you can access or support that you may not be aware of. For example:

Some suppliers will take-back damaged, incorrectly engraved nameplates, and handles in order to re-process them into new products of the same quality.

Adelaide Cemeteries Authority now remove combustible components such as coffin handles prior to cremation to reduce plastics being burnt in the cremation process. Similarly, these are chipped and re-processed into new items.

THEME 3: Sustainable funeral options

As environmental awareness grows, many families are seeking end-of-life options that reflect their values and care for the planet. Sustainable funeral alternatives offer a meaningful way to honour loved ones while reducing ecological impact.

Natural burials

Natural burials allow for an end-of-life practice where the body is returned to the earth in the most natural way possible. The process encourages natural decomposition and supporting the local ecosystem health. In South Australia a natural burial is defined as:

- Without preparation of the remains using chemical preservatives
- Containment of remains only in a shroud or biodegradable coffin

Natural burial grounds are dedicated areas that promote restoration of native vegetation. Each natural Burial Ground will have their own rules round different aspects such as placement of graves and depth of graves. South Australia currently has three natural burial grounds: Enfield Memorial Park – Wirra Wonga, Smithfield Memorial Park – Pilyu Yarta and Kersbrook Cemetery – Martungka. Rather than using traditional headstones, these areas use native plantings with a communal memorial stone. Each burial is microchipped to allow for the final resting place to be located now and into the future.

In Australia, the regulation of burial practices, including natural burials, is managed at the state and territory level. While there is no uniform national legislation, most jurisdictions permit natural burials under specific conditions.

Low-emissions cremation alternatives

While natural burials offer a return to the earth, cremation remains a common choice. Traditional cremation uses natural gas or other fossil fuels to incinerate the body at temperatures ranging from **760 to 980°C**. A study on the environmental impacts of funerals showed that approximately 160kg of carbon dioxide equivalents was released per procedure[3]. This would be roughly equivalent to driving a passenger car 800 km.

Cremation accounts for approximately two-thirds of all funeral services in Australia.[4]

Fortunately, more sustainable cremation options are emerging.

Transitioning from fossil fuel fired to hybrid cremators (and full electric when available) offers a cleaner alternative reducing carbon emissions. However, their adoption in Australia is limited due to infrastructure costs and electricity requirements. The low emissions element also is dependent on how the electricity is sourced or generated.

Electrifying systems reduces emissions because it replaces fossil fuel use with electricity, which can be generated from cleaner, renewable energy sources.

To offset energy use in other systems, consider the integration of heat recovery from the flue (flue temperature is often around 300 degrees). This heat can be used for generating hot water, heat-driven refrigeration (i.e. absorption chiller) and potentially electricity generation (e.g. organic rankine cycle). These options require consistent generation and be co-located with end-use activities.

Other options, though not yet widely available or legally recognised in Australia, include:

- **Promession:** freeze-drying the body with liquid nitrogen before turning it into a powder
- **Recomposition (Natural Organic Reduction):** transforming the body into soil using organic materials.
- **Alkaline hydrolysis**, also known as water cremation or aquamation. In this method, the body is placed in a stainless-steel vessel filled with a water and potassium hydroxide solution. This process mimics and accelerates natural decomposition. The remaining liquid is sterile and can be safely recycled through standard wastewater treatment systems (upon approval). Some additional benefits include pacemakers do not need to be removed beforehand, and medical implants like titanium hips remain intact, sterile, and reusable. Personal items such as jewellery or gold teeth can be recovered prior to the process if desired.

3 Environmental impacts of funerals: burial vs cremation - Bare
4 Funeral services sector report

THEME 4:
Engaging with families on sustainability

As interest in environmental responsibility continues to rise, more families are seeking funeral practices that reflect their ecological values. For many, sustainable choices offer a way to honour life by preserving the earth. Funeral directors have a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to meet this demand with informed, sensitive, and trustworthy guidance.

Discussing environmental choices during emotionally charged times requires delicacy, education, and empathy. Here are some principles to help approach sustainability with compassion and clarity:

- **Offer clear options:** Present factual, easy-to-understand information about sustainable alternatives, such as natural burials, natural material coffins, and cremation options with lower emissions, this way families can make choices that feel right for them. Avoid overwhelming them with technical jargon, instead, offer choices in plain language and with supporting visuals when possible.
- **Demistify the processes:** Explain what families can expect when choosing these types of options: for example, in a natural burial the loved-one will be interred in only a shroud or biodegradable coffin and care for the body is without embalming. Reassure families that unembalmed bodies, when respectfully and naturally prepared, are both safe and appropriate for viewing. These practices may feel unfamiliar, but your guidance can help make them meaningful.
- **Highlight the positive impact:** Highlighting the environmental benefits of these choices, such as reduced carbon emissions, conservation of natural resources, and preservation of native habitats can help families feel more confident and comforted in their decisions. A gentle, informed conversation can transform what might feel unfamiliar into something deeply meaningful.

  It is also important to discuss the rules in the cemeteries they are wanting to use as some requests may go against their policies. Some cemeteries have banned or discourage practises such as the use of helium ballons and plastic sleeves on floral tributes.
- **Frame sustainability as legacy:** Present sustainable choices as a way to honour a loved one's life and values. Positioning these options as part of creating a meaningful legacy can help families connect emotionally with the idea of sustainability.
- **Tailor the conversation:** Every family is different. Some may embrace home funerals or natural burials, while others may prefer more blended services. Listen closely to their preferences, traditions, and levels of comfort. Adapt your guidance to meet them where they are, always respecting their unique cultural or personal context.

Creating a legacy through sustainable choices

Many families are unsure what to do with items such as hearing aids, prescription glasses and belongings after the passing of a loved one. Funeral arrangers can offer valuable guidance by highlighting options that not only reduce waste but also extend compassion beyond borders. Often the thought that someone else can use them is a comfort to those left behind.

Hearing aids donated to major audiology retailers can be decontaminated and reused in developing countries.

Prescription glasses, including prescription sunglasses, can similarly be returned to participating optometrists for cleaning, checking, and redistribution to communities in need. Where optometry retailers are unavailable, local Lions Clubs often coordinate these collections.

Furniture, whitegoods and clothing can be donated to various not-for-profit organisations that support the homeless, victims of domestic violence and low-income families.

These thoughtful choices allow families to find comfort in knowing that their loved one's possessions continue to serve others. These donations not only supports global health equity but also honour the memory of the deceased through a legacy of care and sustainability

Your commitment to sustainability is not just about what you offer—it's also about how you communicate. Done well, it builds trust, reinforces your values, and sets your funeral home apart as a leader in ethical and compassionate care.

- **Make it easy to find:** Ensure that your sustainable offerings are clearly presented across all touchpoints, brochures, websites, price lists, and consultations. Use clear headings, icons, and plain language to help families quickly understand what's available and how it aligns with their values.
- **Showcase values, not just products:** Sustainability messaging should be grounded in your broader values as a business. Highlight partnerships with like-minded organisations or suppliers and show how your internal practices reflect your environmental ethos. Families are more likely to trust providers they see as genuine and mission driven.
- **Avoid greenwashing:** It is essential to be transparent about what qualifies as a natural burial as per state-based legislation verse making sustainable choices to minimise impact. Clearly explain the environmental benefits of each option, what is included, and any limitations, this builds trust and avoids confusion or scepticism.
- **Use digital tools thoughtfully:** Shift toward paperless communications, online memorials, e-invites, and guestbooks are all environmentally conscious offerings and widely accepted.

Sustainability is not a trend, it's a growing value system that aligns with care, compassion, and community. By embracing green funeral practices with knowledge and empathy, funeral homes can not only meet changing client expectations but lead the way toward a more ethical, meaningful, and environmentally sound approach to death care.

Appendix – The site walk-through checklist

Undertaking a regular housekeeping walk-through of your operations can lead to several benefits, including:

- Identifying maintenance issues and opportunities for improvement
- Identifying areas where energy, water, and materials are utilised and where some of these resources may be used unnecessarily
- Discovering improvements to operational practices to streamline workflows, minimise waste, and enhance productivity
- Picking up on staff concerns and inefficient behaviours
- Demonstrating commitment to actioning your sustainability goals

Varying times of the walkaround will allow you to get a holistic perspective on how resources are being utilised in your business.

On the overleaf we have included our version of a walk-through checklist for funeral directors. Not everything may be applicable to your business – feel free to create your own checklist! Perhaps you already do a regular walk-through, if so, fantastic! This may give you some ideas for additional items to include in your own version.

Check	Category	Observation	Notes	Action
☐	*Equipment Type or Category*	*What should I be looking out for?*	*Note down your observations, locations, quantities, and any other relevant details. This will help when you engage your service provider!*	*Is there an opportunity to take action?*
		Waste management		
☐	Waste segregation	Which of the following waste streams are segregated at your funeral home:	☐ Organics ☐ Co-mingled recycling ☐ 10c refundable bottles and cans ☐ Paper and cardboard ☐ E-waste ☐ Printer/toner ☐ Fluorescent tube lighting ☐ Medical waste ☐ Yellow sharps container ☐ Chemicals ☐ Batteries ☐ Metals ☐ Soft plastics ☐ Hard waste	☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Back-of house Bins	For each waste streams you segregate: • Does each waste stream have enough bins? • Are the bins located in the most appropriate spot for the collection of the waste stream? • Do you have clear labelling on your bins? • Are staff trained and aware of what goes into each bin?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Guest-facing Bins	Note how many different waste streams you segregate in guest areas (i.e. chapel, service areas etc.): • Are bins located appropriately to where waste is generated? • Do you have clear labelling on your bins? • Do you have food waste (green) and co-mingled recycling (yellow) bins available for guests?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	External location Services	Review materials taken to services outside of your funeral home: • Do you have the correct bins for the collection of waste streams? • Are these clearly labelled for guests? • What practices do you have in place to review the waste segregation options at the location or to take-back to your facility?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Food waste	Assess and review where most of the food waste comes from • Do you have practices in place to avoid over-ordering of perishable items? • Do you decrease top-ups towards the end of service? • For hot meals review the portion size provided • Do you have a system in place to ensure leftover food is not sent to landfill?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Floral waste	Note how is floral waste managed: • Do you encourage families to take-home floral arrangements? • Do you donate floral arrangements (i.e. aged care facilities)? • Do you have a organics bin available to ensure they are composted after use?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Single-use plastics	Note where single-use plastics are still being used • Have you reviewed alternatives?		☐ Yes ☐ No

Check	Category	Observation	Notes	Action
		Energy efficiency		
☐	General lighting	Note any non-LED light fittings. What type of fittings are they?	☐ Fluorescent tube ☐ Compact Fluorescent lamp (CFL) ☐ Halogen downlight ☐ Incandescent ☐ Metal halide or sodium vapour high bays ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	General lighting	Observe and note areas where lighting is used infrequently. Are lights often left on unnecessarily? (i.e. coolrooms, storage areas, car ports etc).		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	General lighting	Is the outdoor/external lighting on a timer or daylight sensor? Are any lights on during the day unnecessarily? (i.e. carpark lighting, external building lights, outdoor areas)		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Computers, monitors, TVs & AV equipment	Note down practices for the use of computers, monitors, printers, TVs and AV equipment • Are energy-saving settings enabled? (i.e. sleep mode for computers after 10min idle or power-saving/eco mode for TVs and projectors) • Do Monitors automatically switch-off after inactivity, not just screensaver mode? • Is all equipment is switched off at the end of the day or when not required.? • Consider using smart, timer or switched power boards to eliminate equipment being left on. • Review the energy efficiency star rating for all computers, monitors, TVs and printers.		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Air conditioners	Inspect indoor unit filters and outdoor unit coils, note if there is a buildup of dirt, dust, or grease.		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Air conditioners	If accessible, inspect air conditioning pipework and note any damaged/missing insulation		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Air conditioners	If accessible, see if you can find the nameplate of your unit(s). Note the following: • Age • Capacity • Input power • Refrigerant type and volume • Co-efficient of performance (COP)		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Controls	Note your current AC temperature set points. Are they within the ideal range? (i.e. 20-22°C in winter and 24-26°C in summer)		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Controls	Can you implement schedules on your AC system(s)? • If so, have any been set? • Are they reflective of your operating/busy times?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Domestic refrigeration	Inspect the condition of domestic fridges and freezers • Do the doors seal well? • Is there any build-up of ice in the freezer compartment? • Can you hear it constantly switching on?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Domestic refrigeration	Review and note the energy star rating of all your domestic fridges and freezers		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Cool rooms	Inspect evaporator unit. Note if there is a buildup of dirt, grease or ice.		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Cool rooms	Check that airflow to the evaporator is unobstructed		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Cool rooms	Inspect the condition of the door and door seals and ask the following: • Does the room seal well? • Are there signs of wear and tear on the door seals? • Is there ice formation on the door frame?		☐ Yes ☐ No

Check	Category	Observation	Notes	Action
☐	Refrigeration plant (outdoor units)	If accessible, see if you can find the nameplate of your unit(s). Note the following: • Age • Capacity • Input power • Refrigerant type and volume • Co-efficient of performance (COP)		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Refrigeration plant (outdoor units)	Note any signs of wear and tear (i.e. general damage, corrosion, excessively noisy compressor/fans, etc.)		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Refrigeration Pipework	Inspect refrigerant pipework and note any damaged/ missing insulation.		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Hot water unit	Note the type and age of your system. See if you can find the date of manufacture on your unit(s).		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Hot water unit	If visible, note the setpoint(s) on your hot water units.		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Hot water pipework	Inspect hot water pipework and note any damaged/ missing insulation.		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Instant boiling hot water units	Review the operating practices of instant boiling hot water units • How often are they used? • Is there potential to install a timer to reduce overnight electricity use?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Compressed air	Inspect compressed air lines for signs of leakage		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	General appliances	Note down practices for the use of general appliances (inc. but not limited to ovens, heated food displays, urns etc.) • Is equipment switched off when not in use • Review the energy efficiency star rating for all appliances.		☐ Yes ☐ No
		Water management		
☐	Water maintenance	Inspect taps and other fittings for signs of leakage		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Efficient water fittings	Inspect water fittings around your site: • Do your taps have aerators? • Are your toilets dual flush? • Do your appliances have a high WELS rating (e.g. washing machines, dishwashers etc.)		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Irrigation	Review your irrigation practices: • What type of irrigation do you use (i.e. manual watering, drip, sprinklers etc)? • Is your irrigation on a timed schedule? • Inspect your connections and lines for signs of leakage		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Rainwater harvesting	Review rainwater harvesting practices • What storage volume do you have? • Do you have a level sensor to understand how much water is available? • Where is rainwater currently used? • Is there potential to expand to additional non-potable uses (i.e. irrigation, toilet flushing, vehicle washing etc.) • Do you regularly inspect and clean filters?		☐ Yes ☐ No

Check	Category	Observation	Notes	Action
		Resource management & renewables		
☐	Solar PV	Review your solar system performance: • Do you know your system size? • Do you have monitoring set-up (i.e. cloud-based monitoring platform)? • Do you know how much your system generates and how much is exported and is this tracked? • Do you undertake any routine maintenance (i.e. annual cleaning of panels)?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Solar PV self-consumption optimisation	Note any practices/equipment that you have onsite that could be used during the day to soak-up solar generations (e.g. electric vehicle charging, hot water systems etc.)		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Resource tracking	Do you track your resource consumption (energy, water, waste, materials etc.) • Do you have a review process for investigating anomalies? • Can you see any trends in consumption?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Insulation & draught-proofing	Inspect your building to identify any obvious sources of draught. Common sources of draughts are gaps around windows, doors, walls and evaporative coolers.		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Windows	Note any external shading features or double-glazed windows. Is there potential to install these features to help heat load in peak summer?		☐ Yes ☐ No
		Sustainable purchasing & customer engagement		
☐	Supplier packaging	Note what is the largest packing materials provided by your suppliers: • Is the packaging recyclable or compostable? • Have you engaged with the supplier to investigate if they can send less packaging or take-back options?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Supplier Production methods & certification	Do you know how your products (i.e. coffins, urns, lining, etc) are made? • Does the supplier hold any third-party certifications (i.e. FSC, ISO 14001 or Fair Trade)? • Do you know if your products are made from renewable, recycled or compostable materials?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Supplier transparency	Have you investigated your supplier's commitment to sustainability? • Are they actively working towards reducing their impact and carbon footprint? • Are they required to report on their environmental footprint?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Local sourcing	Note how many of your suppliers you would consider to be 'local'		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Local sourcing	Do you know how your products are transported? • Is there ability to reduce the number of deliveries?		☐ Yes ☐ No
☐	Paper & stationary	Note what type of paper you use for general printing and customer printing:	☐ Carbon neutral ☐ FSC certified ☐ Recycled content ☐ Other	☐ Yes ☐ No

Tips and tricks

- Sometimes it can be hard to tell whether your lights are LED. Try holding your hand up to the light, if feels quite hot, chances are it's an older style of light fitting.
- It's typical for funeral homes to have different air conditioning systems in different adjoining rooms – sometimes one unit can be set to heating and the other to cooling – they are fighting each other! **Remember to regularly check your control settings.**
- When using evaporative coolers, it is a good idea to keep some windows or doors open to allow good ventilation (Evaporative coolers use moist air to cool). However, when using reverse cycle air conditioners try to keep the space closed to avoid losing that precious heated or cooled air!
- A tap aerator is a device, usually a small screen or fitting, that attaches to the end of a tap spout. It's designed to mix air with the water stream. Run your finger under your tap, if you feel a grid the tap has an aerator installed.

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