



SAMVOA

South African Military Veterans Organisation of Australasia

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT
OF
MILITARY VETERAN FUNERALS
(v.5. 160819)**

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GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF MILITARY VETERAN FUNERALS

- Reference A: Guidelines as proposed by the CMVO
Appendix A: Funeral Planning Worksheet
Appendix B: Suggested Funeral Hymns

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Overview

Veteran funerals may be requested either by the family, or offered to the family. It is an integral part of the responsibilities of Veteran Organisations to conduct veteran funerals in a way that takes military customs and practices into consideration, but also seeks to support and comfort the relatives and friends of those who have passed away.

The aim of this document is to provide guidance on the procedures to be followed before, during and after veteran funerals or memorial services, using the following schedule items:

- B. Communication with the family
- C. Notification of the funeral
- D. Dress regulations for veteran funerals
- E. Procedures for the service
- F. Procedures at the graveside
- G. Use of a flag at a funeral
- H. Wreaths
- I. Follow up

2. Situation

1. It is acknowledged that the wishes of the family should always be taken into account when Veteran Organisations are requested to arrange or be involved in funerals. Section B.2 below outlines the varied involvement by SAMVOA members, and sections B.3 – B.5 outline the items regarding the form and content of the service which need to be discussed with the family.
Whatever the level of participation by SAMVOA members, the family should be thoroughly briefed on what to expect from the military ceremonial, as this is likely to be foreign to them.
2. It is recognised that allied Veteran Organisations, such as the Memorable Order of the Tin Hats (MOTHS), also have prescribed procedures for military funerals. Where such an organisation may be involved in a veteran funeral, agreement must be reached on the ceremonial procedures to be followed, and each organisation's level of involvement.
3. Funeral customs also differ between religious denominations. Where a civilian minister/priest is involved in leading a veteran's funeral, or sharing leadership of the event with SAMVOA, agreement must be reached as to the shared responsibilities during the service (section B.4), and the military ceremonial process carried out by SAMVOA (section B.5).



3. Guiding Principles

In order to streamline the funeral / memorial service, the following guiding principles should be adhered to at all times (as far as possible):

1. Veterans may not combine family participation or political elements with the Veteran Organisation's conduct of the funeral / memorial service.
2. There must be a clear delineation between the Veteran ceremonial and civilian segment of the service at all times.
3. The number of speeches at funeral / memorial services should be limited to three, unless the family prefer more.
4. Veterans' protocol should be followed pertaining to speeches made by veteran representatives, with the most senior representative of the Region or Club present, speaking on behalf of SAMVOA, if at all.
5. No political speeches are allowed at a full veteran funeral / memorial service. In the case of a semi-veteran funeral, where the family determines the church service and the veterans the graveside, procedure, the family retains the prerogative to identify speakers of their choice.
6. It is the responsibility of the SAMVOA representative working with the family to determine if a political or other element of the proposed service could compromise SAMVOA's principles of inclusiveness and tolerance. In this case, it may be best for SAMVOA veterans to attend the service without participation.

B. COMMUNICATION WITH THE FAMILY

1. Liaison with the Family

During the planning of a funeral / memorial service, the family should be offered as much support as possible. A person from the applicable Veteran Organisation should be appointed to liaise with the family and assist them with arrangements.

2. SAMVOA Involvement

The first discussion to be held with the family should focus on the degree of involvement in the service by SAMVOA members (and other allied veteran organisations). This discussion should be sensitively and thoroughly discussed.

There are three possible levels of involvement:

- The service is led by SAMVOA members in its entirety (*see section E.1*);
- The service is shared between SAMVOA and a civilian minister/priest (*see section E.2*);
- SAMVOA members merely attend the service (*see section E.3*).

3. Form of Service

The second important topic to be discussed with the family is the form that the service will take.

The order of service suggested in section E.1 can be adjusted to suit the form of service chosen by the family.



There are a number of funeral / memorial service variations, most commonly:

- A funeral Service in a church/chapel, with the coffin present, and with a graveside burial immediately afterward;
- A funeral Service in a church/chapel, with the coffin present, but with a *private* burial or interment of ashes at a later date;
- A memorial service, with no coffin present;
- A funeral service and burial at the graveside.

4. Items to be Planned (see checklist Appendix A)

Where the service will be led by SAMVOA, or shared with a civilian minister/priest, the following items for the service need to be discussed and arranged.

Note that some of these items may take some time to finalise, and a second meeting with the family may be necessary to confirm the details.

- Music before and after the service (can be recorded music);
- Eulogies / tributes e.g. a family member/friend and a SAMVOA member;
- Hymns - three are required (see the Order of Service in section E.1);
- Reading/s - one or two readings or poetry, and who will read them;
- Any other items or participation by family/friends.

5. Military Honours

The family should be consulted and briefed on the ceremonial commonly conducted during a military/veteran funeral. Anticipate that they may like some items more than others.

See sections E& F for the variations in ceremonial that depend on whether there is a graveside section to the service.

Suggested ceremonial items are:

- the coffin is draped with the SAMVOA flag (other items like flowers, photos and medals would be placed on top of the flag) (see section G);
- the deceased's medals (if any) are displayed on the coffin;
- if sufficient veterans are in attendance, they form a guard of honour for the entry of the coffin into the church/chapel;
- pallbearers could be veterans, or family members, or a combination of both;
- the veterans will form up outside after the service, at a convenient location near the hearse/carrier, and salute when the hearse/carrier drives away;
- at the graveside ceremony, the veterans form up on the opposite side of the grave to the family;
- respects paid to the deceased at the cemetery by the veterans commonly include the reading of the Ode by the chaplain, a minute's silence, and the veterans coming to the salute as the coffin is lowered;
- the flag will be removed from the coffin, along with other displayed items, before final interment (see section G).



C. NOTIFICATION OF THE FUNERAL

Where the deceased is to be awarded a veteran's funeral, the members of the organisations, and where appropriate other organisations, should be informed. The notification should provide:

- The time of the funeral and when guests should be seated;
- Location of the funeral (with GPS co-ordinates, if possible);
- Dress code, especially pertaining to wearing medals and arm (mourning) bands (see section D);
- The arrangements for wreaths / flowers;
- Whether or not the funeral will be followed by a ceremony at a cemetery;
- Any events after the funeral (e.g. tea or a wake).

D. DRESS REGULATIONS FOR VETERANS AT FUNERALS

- Notifications of funerals should stipulate the dress code.
- In the absence of any specific dress code specifications, the default dress to be worn by military veterans at funerals is Dress Number 1A.
Refer the official SAMVOA website at <http://samvoa.org/about-samvoa/samvoa-dress-regulations>;
- Association headdress is worn outside the church;
- Pall bearers are to wear a black mourning band, 90mm wide, around the left arm, midway between the shoulder and elbow and white gloves;
- Personal commemorative medals (specifically the SASC and SAMVOA Commemorative Medal) and or service medals of deceased forebears may be worn on the right chest.

E. PROCEDURES AT THE SERVICE

1. Full Veteran's Funeral

The following points are provided as a guideline, and may vary as required.

Pre-Service Ceremony for Entry of the Coffin

- a. When the coffin arrives at the church/chapel, it is draped with the SAMVOA flag before entry, other family items of remembrance being placed on the flag. (see section G)
- b. The chaplain calls for the pallbearers, who take their places under the direction of the funeral director.
- c. If sufficient numbers of veterans are present, they form an honour guard outside the door, comprising two opposite rows, with arm's length spacing between and two paces apart through which the coffin will pass. Veterans should preferably be wearing headdress.
- d. The veteran closest to the door acts as guard commander and calls the honour guard to attention. Veterans wearing headdress salute as the coffin reaches the honour guard and whilst the coffin passes between the honour guard into the church/chapel. The salute will commence on the command of "Up!" given by the guard commander and dropped after the coffin has entered the church/chapel on the command of "Down!"
- e. The Chaplain precedes the coffin into the church/chapel. The funeral director will see to the positioning of the coffin at the front of the church/chapel



- f. Family and guests are seated approximately 5 minutes before the service
- g. Once the coffin has entered the church/chapel the honour guard will do an inward turn on command of the guard commander and proceed to follow stepping off in pairs and take up their pre-allocated seats inside the chapel/church.

Order of Service in the Church/Chapel

- h. Greeting & Arrangements (e.g. cemetery, pallbearers, refreshments/wake)
- i. Opening Scripture passages
- j. Hymn
- k. Prayer of Approach & Confession
- l. Scripture reading/s
- m. Eulogy by a family member
- n. Tribute by a friend (optional)
- o. Tribute by a fellow veteran
- p. Hymn
- q. Sermon (optional)
- r. Prayer of Thanksgiving for the life of the deceased & Lord's Prayer
- s. Hymn

If there is NO Graveside Ceremony:

In the case of there being *no public graveside service*, the funeral is concluded at the church/chapel, including military honours, as below:

- s. Words of Committal by the chaplain
- t. Prayer for the family
- u. Benediction by chaplain
- v. The chaplain asks to congregation to stand for the military honours
- w. The chaplain reads the Ode
- x. The chaplain calls for observance of a minute's silence
- y. The chaplain concludes the silence with the words "Lest we forget"
- z. The chaplain calls the pallbearers to the front, and they take position alongside the coffin, and proceed under direction of the funeral directors
- aa. During a musical postlude, the chaplain escorts the family to the hearse/carrier behind the coffin
- bb. The organisation's flag and remembrance items should be removed from the coffin before it is placed in the hearse after the service. (see section G)
- cc. Military/veterans form up to one side of the hearse/carrier (furthest away and opposite the church/chapel door) with arm's length spacing between and all wearing headdress. The pre-appointed guard commander shall form up on the extreme right hand side and act as "marker".
- dd. The chaplain gives a blessing before the hearse/carrier departs



- ee. Military/veterans come to attention at the command of the guard commander. Veterans wearing headdress will salute at the command of "Up!" as the hearse/carrier departs and hold the salute until the hearse has departed whereupon the guard commander will give the command "Down!" and the salute is dropped. The guard commander will follow with the command "Fall out!" whereupon veterans will do an outwards turn (away from the hearse) pause for a count of two-three then march off smartly stepping off with the left foot, take three paces and break away.

If there IS a Graveside Ceremony:

If there *is a graveside service*, then the church/chapel portion concludes as below, before proceeding to the graveside (see section F):

- t. The chaplain announces arrangements for travelling to the cemetery
- u. The chaplain calls the pallbearers to the front, and they take position alongside the coffin.
- v. During a musical postlude, the chaplain escorts the family to the hearse/carrier behind the coffin.
- w. Veterans will form up and follow the drill as described in E.1.cc above.
- x. The chaplain gives a blessing as the hearse/carrier moves off.
- y. Attendees move off to the cemetery.

See section F for the graveside ceremony and military honours

2. Combined Civilian/Veteran Service

Where the family would like to combine their own religious/political service with the veterans' service, it is important for the SAMVOA chaplain/representative to bear in mind the Guiding Principles, regarding SAMVOA being compromised through association with an overtly political event. If this seems to be the case, then it would be better for the veterans not to participate in the church/chapel service, in order to maintain a clear distinction between the two parts of the event.

If it appears to be appropriate for SAMVOA to participate in the church/chapel event, there must be collaboration on the Order of Service between the civilian minister and the SAMVOA chaplain/representative.

The Order of Service will probably be similar to the one set out in section E.1 above.

There are a number of ways for veterans to participate in the service:

1. The veterans could attend the funeral in uniform, Dress Number 1A, as stipulated in section D.
2. Veterans could represent the association by doing a reading, leading a prayer, presenting a Tribute, acting as ushers at the door of the church/chapel
3. Veterans could pay their respects at the time the hearse leaves the church/chapel or at the graveside
4. The coffin could be draped with the association flag before the service, and the flag removed after the service (see section G)



If there is NO Graveside Ceremony:

In the case of there being *no public graveside service*, the civilian service is concluded at the church/chapel by the minister/priest, as below:

- a) Words of Committal by the minister/priest
- b) Prayer for the family
- c) Benediction by minister/priest

Following the conclusion of the civilian service, the following Military Honours could be conducted by the chaplain:

- d) The chaplain asks to congregation to stand for the military honours
- e) The chaplain reads the Ode
- f) The chaplain calls for observance of a minute's silence
- g) The chaplain concludes the silence with the words "Lest we forget"

Exit from the church/chapel:

- h) The chaplain or minister/priest calls the pallbearers to the front, and they take position alongside the coffin
- i) During a musical postlude, the minister/priest and chaplain escort the family to the hearse/carrier behind the coffin
- j) Remembrance items should be removed from the coffin by nominated Veterans, before it is placed in the hearse, and handed to the family
- k) The organisation's flag is removed from the coffin (see section G)
- l) Military/veterans form up to one side of the hearse/carrier and follow the procedure as laid out in sections E.1.cc and E.1.ee above.
- m) The minister/priest may give a blessing before the hearse/carrier departs

If there IS a Graveside Ceremony:

If there *is a graveside service*, then the church/chapel portion concludes as below, before proceeding to the graveside (see section F):

- a) The minister/priest announces arrangements for travelling to the cemetery
- b) The minister/priest calls the pallbearers to the front, and they take position alongside the coffin and proceed under instruction from the funeral directors
- c) During a musical postlude, the minister/priest and chaplain escort the family to the hearse/carrier behind the coffin
- d) Once the hearse has departed, attendees move off to the cemetery

See section F for the graveside ceremony and military honours



3. Veterans Attend Funeral Only

If, after discussion with the family as outlined in section B.2, it is their preference that there is no overt veterans' association participation in the funeral, then there are still a number of options that could be raised for consideration by the family.

Possibilities include:

1. The association members could attend the funeral in uniform, Dress Number 1A, as stipulated in section D.
2. Veterans could represent the association by participating in the service e.g. doing a reading, leading a prayer, presenting a Tribute, acting as ushers
3. The association members could pay their respects at the time the hearse leaves the church/chapel or at the graveside as laid out in sections E.1.cc and E.1.ee above.
4. The coffin could be draped with the association flag before the service, and the flag removed after the service

F. PROCEDURES AT THE GRAVESIDE

The following sequence of events is provided as a guideline:

1. The carrying of the coffin from the hearse to the grave by the pallbearers
2. Veterans form up on the opposite side of the grave from the family with elbow-spacing between wearing headdress. The pre-appointed guard commander shall form up on the extreme right hand side and act as marker.
3. Prayer by minister/chaplain
4. Scripture reading or a few words of comfort
5. Words of Committal by minister/chaplain
6. Closing prayer by minister/chaplain
7. If a civilian minister/priest has solely conducted the religious part of the committal, then there is now a handover to the Veteran chaplain
8. The Chaplain reads the Ode and calls for a minute silence.
The chaplain concludes the silence with the words "Lest we forget"
If a bugler is available, the Ode is followed by Last Post, a minute silence, and then Reveille/Rouse.
If a piper is available, a Lament could be played after "Lest We Forget".
Veterans should come to attention and salute during the playing of the Last Post on the command of "Up!" by a pre-appointed guard commander, and similarly the salute is dropped on the command of "Down!" once the last post is played.
If the SAMVOA Standard is present it may be gathered in the hand and slowly lowered to rest in a horizontal position without any part of the Standard touching the ground.
The Standard is raised to normal position during the playing of the Rouse.
9. Remembrance items are now removed from the coffin by a nominated veteran, and handed to the family
10. The association flag is removed from the coffin by two veterans (see section G)



11. Veterans will salute as the coffin is lowered into the grave on the command of “Up!” given by the guard commander and hold the salute until the coffin has come to rest whereupon the guard commander will give the command “Down!” and the salute is dropped. The guard commander will then follow with the command “Fall out!” whereupon the veterans will do a right turn, pause for a count of two-three then march off smartly stepping off with the left foot, take three paces and break away.

G. USE OF A FLAG AT A FUNERAL

The following instructions are adapted from the Australian RSL website

When used to cover a coffin at funerals, the top left quarter (the upper hoist) of the flag should be draped over the left shoulder of the deceased, with the ‘Pro Patria’ emblem in the middle of the coffin, ensuring that the flag is face-up.

At the graveside, the flag should be removed before the casket is lowered. *Veterans doing this should take extreme care at the edge of the grave.*

At a crematorium, it may be difficult to remove the flag with dignity, given the location of the coffin in the curtained alcove. *Discuss with the funeral directors.*

At all times care should be taken to prevent any portion of the flag touching the ground.

To remove the flag, two nominated veterans are to move to a position at the head and foot of the coffin and:

- Grasp each end of the flag and lift it clear of the coffin, then take TWO steps to one side of the coffin, and spread the flag to arm’s length.
- Working together, they fold the flag once along its width, with the upper hoist facing downwards.
- The veteran at the foot of the casket then moves towards the other and hands him his corners of the flag, making a fold along its length. He then lifts the trailing edge to fold it upwards once again.
- The veteran at the head of the casket folds the flag along its width to make it a suitable size to be carried draped over the left arm.

H. WREATHS

Wreaths, where appropriate, should be delivered to the church ahead of the funeral. With the consent of the family, one wreath from the veteran’s organisation concerned may accompany the coffin in the hearse.

I. FOLLOW UP

1. Subsequent to the funeral, contact should be maintained with the family to ensure their welfare.
2. The families should be given advice by the veterans organisation concerned on the benefits possibly available to them.



SAMVOA

South African Military Veterans Organisation of Australasia

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APPENDIXB – SUGGESTED FUNERAL HYMNS

1. Guidelines for selecting music

In helping the family to choose music for the service, be aware that a mixture of religious and secular music might be their preference.

If the service is to be held in a chapel or church, then using both the organ/piano for hymns and recorded music played over the PA system is usually possible. The family might want to play the deceased person's favourite piece of music, and this could be included as an exit piece while the coffin leaves the church, or as the coffin is lowered into the grave.

If the service is to be held outdoors e.g. at the graveside, then recorded music will have to be used, along with a portable PA system.

Singing without music is not recommended.

2. Suggested Hymns

- Abide with Me
- Amazing Grace
- Be still my soul
- Be Thou my vision
- Dear Lord and Father of mankind
- Guide me, O thou great Jehovah
- How great thou art
- I heard the voice of Jesus say
- Immortal, Invisible, God only wise
- Lead kindly light
- Love divine, all loves excelling
- Make me a channel of your peace
- Mine eyes have seen the glory
- Now thank we all our God
- O God, our help in ages past
- Praise my soul the King of Heaven
- Rock of Ages
- The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended
- The King of love my shepherd is
- The Lord's my shepherd (Psalm 23)
- The old rugged cross
- Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son
- To God be the glory
- When I survey the wondrous cross