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Subject: Public Health Orders
Date: 10 July 2021 at 3:21 PM
To: Rama Athreiya vedasabha@gmail.com

MS

Hi Pandit Rama,

As discussed, is the below an accurate representation of the issue you are seeking clarification on:

As part of authorised Hindu cremation rites and rituals, a Chief Priest and Assistant Priest are required to undertake official religious duties within a formal 13 day mourning period. An essential component of the mourning service is a post cremation ceremony. This involves visiting the principal residence of the Principal Mourner deceased to undertake specific ceremonial duties over a 4 day period. This is the barest minimum permitted under Hindu Cannon Law. All of these duties can be undertaken in observance of social distancing measures. The Hindu Clergy are seeking clarification if this practice is permitted under the current Public Health Orders as well as the travel (via direct route) of priests to official cremation and ceremonial duties. The Australian Council of Hindu Clergy are willing to verify these official duties of Priests by way of a formal letter from the Council, identifying and authorising the undertaking of these duties, to ensure an accurate record is kept.

The Clergy also has a formal place of business, owned and registered by The Australian Council of Hindu Clergy, which could be used as an alternate centralised place to undertake the ceremonial rites, instead of the principal place of residence of the Principal Mourner. Whilst this option is not the preference, it is an option provided by The Clergy in an effort to comprise.

It is believed that the above duties are provided for under the current Public Health Orders (*Public Health (COVID-19 Temporary Movement and Gathering Restrictions) Order 2021*) given:

1. The work of Hindu Priests is an official work function
2. The Priests are providing compassionate care as a function of their official work duties
3. The post cremation ceremony is a vital component of the mourning ceremony
4. The Hindu Priests are providing pastoral care as a result of undertaking these functions

Mike



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