

**From:** Michael Shaw michael.shaw@multicultural.nsw.gov.au   
**Subject:** SENSITIVE - Wording for Brief  
**Date:** 20 July 2021 at 5:18 PM  
**To:** Rama Athreiya vedasabha@gmail.com

MS

Hi Rama,

Please see below for your review. We need to confirm that the below is accurate as it will form part of a formal brief assessed by the Minister for Health.

The majority of the content has been drafted by health following our original email to them and subsequent phone calls.

I will call you in 5 minutes to discuss after you have had time to read.

Mike

## Analysis

Multicultural NSW has written on behalf of Mr Pandit Ramachandra Athreiya (Rama) of the Australian Council of Hindu Clergy which is seeking an exemption to allow two clergy to visit the places of residences of Principal Mourner on four separate days as part of authorised Hindu cremation and ceremonial duties, following the death of a member of the Hindu faith. Pandit Rama advises that until this function is complete, the cremation service of the deceased is considered incomplete.

Under the current Order, **only one person** can visit at a place of residence in Greater Sydney for certain reasons including to fulfil carers' responsibilities, or to provide care or assistance to a vulnerable person. A reasonable excuse to leave a place of residence includes to provide pastoral care if you are a priest, minister of religion or member of a religious order. At present, temporary stay at home directions are in place for Greater Sydney given the increasing number of infectious cases in the community and unlinked cases of community transmission.

## **The Australian Council of Hindu Clergy seeks an exemption to allow two visitors to principal mourners' households on four days as part of cremation rites and rituals**

Multicultural NSW has written on behalf of Mr Pandit Rama of the Australian Council of Hindu Clergy which is seeking an exemption to allow two clergy to visit the places of residences of principal mourners on four separate days. Under Hindu 'Canon Law', a Chief Priest and an 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 where the two clergy visit the place of residence of the Principal Mourner of the deceased to undertake specific ceremonial duties over a four-day period. This is the barest minimum permitted under Hindu Canon Law. There are specific functions required during this service that must involve two priests. Usually three priests are required, however the Council have consulted the Clergy and their Canon Law and have compromised to the use of just the Chief Priest and Assistant Priest. Until these functions are complete, the cremation service of the deceased is considered incomplete. These duties can be undertaken with observance of physical distancing measures, including social distancing and the wearing of facemasks.

The Clergy also has a formal place of business, registered for use by The Australian Council of Hindu Clergy, which could be used as an alternate centralised place to undertake the ceremonial rites, instead of the home of the principal mourner. NSW Health would consider these premises to be a place of public worship when ceremonial rites are carried out. This is the lesser preferred option, however the Council have identified this as an option in an effort to work with Health to find a suitable resolution.

There are potential impacts on mental health if rites associated with a person's passing are not able to be observed. However, these are extraordinary times and protecting the health of the community is NSW

Health's absolute priority.



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