



# Loss of a loved one support guide.

We're here to help you with some of  
the difficult steps and decisions ahead.



**200 years**  
proudly supporting Australia

# About this guide.

Losing a loved one is never easy. It is one of the most difficult and overwhelming times in anyone's life. That's why we created this guide. Our aim is to provide you with all the support you need to help you during this difficult time.

The first part of the guide talks through some of the initial steps you'll need to take, such as registering the loss, notifying the bank and other organisations your loved one dealt with, as well as obtaining the Will. We will help you through as much of this as we can.

The second part focusses on what happens to any accounts or investments your loved one had with the Westpac Group. Whether you're a partner, a close family member helping with co-ordination, an Executor or another authorised party, we'll let you know what you can expect from us.

Lastly, we have a whole section dedicated to some of the most frequently asked questions, as well as a glossary of some of the legal terms and jargon you might come across.

Our team are on hand to help you make sense of this guide, and to support you in any way they can. So please, if you need a hand with anything, feel free to contact us.

**Our Support team:** Westpac Estates Management Team

1300 130 240 (Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm AEST)

**Calling from overseas:** +612 9767 0722

**Email:** [estatesmanagement@westpac.com.au](mailto:estatesmanagement@westpac.com.au)

**Westpac Bereavement Site:** [westpac.com.au/bereavement](http://westpac.com.au/bereavement)

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Your step  
by step guide.

Whilst we understand your mind is probably on other things when someone close to you passes away, a number of things need to be taken care of as soon as possible.

We know that this can be daunting, so we've broken it down into six simple steps. If there's anything we can do to help you with any of them, just let us know.

### Six things you need to do:

**Step 1     Obtaining the Doctor's Certificate.**

Before you can move forward with funeral arrangements or any kind of administration, you'll need to find the Doctor's Certificate or Proof of Death.

**Step 2     Locating the Will (if there is one).**

It's important to get hold of an original, signed and witnessed version of your loved one's Will. If they don't have one, a legal representative can act on their behalf. Otherwise, we can take instruction from direct next-of-kin. Just contact your local branch with 'proof of death', and let them know that a Will couldn't be located.

**Step 3     Making funeral or memorial arrangements and registering the death.**

Planning a funeral or memorial so soon after a loss can be emotionally challenging and, often, unexpectedly costly.

To help ease the pressure, we may be able to free up funds from the deceased's Estate to cover expenses.

**Step 4     Notifying organisations and people.**

When someone passes, a number of organisations and people need to be made aware. We can help you to identify who they might be, and point you in the right direction.

**Step 5     Identifying yourself.**

If you're not a Westpac customer, you'll need to identify yourself to us. We'll let you know what documents you'll need to do this.

**Step 6     The Estate and important considerations.**

Each person's Estate is unique and requires special consideration and, therefore, time to finalise. To help keep things moving, we'll let you know what documents we need from you as we proceed.

**Step 1**

**Obtain a  
doctor's  
certificate.**

A Certificate of Death allows you to get on with things like funeral arrangements and deal with your loved one's Estate. With this in mind, it's important to obtain one as soon as possible.

## **Doctor's Certificate of Cause of Death.**

A doctor will sign a certificate called the 'Certificate of Death', which confirms that your loved one has passed. Once this is obtained, a funeral company can take them into their care and start making arrangements.

A Certificate of Death will also allow Executors or next-of-kin to formally notify organisations and other parties of their loved one's passing, and access funds from his or her account to cover certain funeral costs. For this reason, it's important to keep all proof of death documents in a safe place.

### **Here's what you need to obtain as soon as possible.**

- Driver's licence number.
- Passport number.
- Marriage certificate.
- Divorce Decree (outcome of a divorce, signed by a judge).
- Birth Certificate.
- Centrelink details (particularly if the deceased was receiving a pension).
- Member numbers: Locate member numbers of any memberships in professional, fraternal or military organisations.

You might also need to provide copies of these documents to various other parties as the Estate is finalised.

The Department of Human Services has more information on what to do following a death. You can access this at [humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/what-to-do-following-death](https://humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/what-to-do-following-death)

If you're concerned about the financial road ahead after the loss of a loved one, feel free to contact Customer Assist on **1800 067 497**.



**Step 2**

# Locating the will.

A Will is a legal document that states how the person's assets and property are to be distributed after their death. You'll need to find the last known signed and witnessed version of it.

If you can't find a Will at your loved one's home, it's a good idea to ask their solicitor, bank or financial adviser if they have it.

If the Will is held in a safety deposit box and you need access to it, you'll have to provide at least one of the proof of death requirements (e.g. Medical Certificate, Death Certificate, Funeral Bill, Solicitor's or Coroner's Letter or Grant of Probate Bond). Two bankers will be with you when you access the safety deposit box, but you can't take it with you. A certified copy will be provided to you as long as you're named as an Executor, or you can prove that you're an authorised nominee of an Executor.

If you are the Executor of the Will, you'll be responsible for distributing your loved one's assets to the people named within it. Usually, one or more Executors will be nominated in the Will to carry out this administration.

### **What if there is no Will?**

If your loved one hasn't left a Will, the next-of-kin will generally be expected to administer the deceased's Estate. The main reason we will request a Death Certificate is because it usually tells us who the next-of-kin is.

Also, in cases where the deceased hasn't left a Will, you may hear them described as having "died intestate". This means the Estate is to be shared under a set legal formula. For more information on how this works, you can get in touch with your local State Public Trustee. Property can only be transferred by a grant of Letters of Administration, which is essentially a court order that determines everyone's entitlements.

**Step 3**

**Funeral or  
memorial  
arrangements  
& registering  
the death.**

Preparing for a funeral or memorial can often be confronting, both logistically and emotionally. You might already know how your loved one wanted their funeral or memorial, or there may be instructions in the Will or other papers. If not, don't worry. A Funeral Director can help you to make all the necessary arrangements.

Funerals or memorials can be unexpectedly expensive too, especially in cases where they need to be paid for up front. So, unless a pre-paid funeral plan exists, it's worth checking how much money is available before setting plans in motion.

As a rough guide, you should allow upwards of around \$7,000 for the cost of a funeral. Although, as we mentioned earlier, this can vary quite a bit, depending on the provider and the type of funeral that is chosen.

## **Using funds from the deceased's Estate to pay for the funeral or memorial.**

We are able to assist with paying for the costs for the funeral or memorial from the deceased's accounts. This is subject to their being funds available and all the Executor/s, solicitors or Next of Kin/s agree and make a request.

If there are funds in the deceased account you can send us the original tax invoice and we will make the payment on your behalf. If there aren't enough funds in the account we will make a part payment with the money available and close the account.

If you would like to claim for costs already paid you can send us the original invoice and tax receipt, with the payee's name clearly stated, and we will reimburse the payee directly.

### **The cost of a funeral.**

This can vary greatly and depends on what sort of ceremony is planned. Generally though, the main costs will be:

- Funeral Director fees.
- The cost of the coffin, casket or urn.
- Burial or cremation fees.
- The cost of arranging memorials.

If you'd like more information about funerals and finding a Funeral Director, visit the Australian Funeral Directors Association at [www.afda.org.au](http://www.afda.org.au)

## Bereavement allowances.

If you're an Australian resident, you might be eligible for a bereavement allowance to help cover the cost of the funeral. A number of organisations provide them, including:

- Centrelink.
- Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Insurance companies.
- Some private health funds.
- Unions.

Conditions on these bereavement allowances can change at any given point, so we'd recommend getting in touch with Centrelink for the most up-to-date information. You can reach them on **132300**.

## Using funds from the deceased's Estate to pay for other costs.

Many people are surprised to find additional costs they need to cover, on top of what's required for the funeral. If this happens, we might be able to help out.

Westpac could:

- Consider releasing funds from the account(s) to cover our late customer's utility bills, money owed in tax, aged care facility bills and medical fees.
- Assist and release funds to cover costs associated with lodging an application for a Grant of Probate, Letters of Administration or a Probate Bond.
- Assess other bills on a case-by-case basis.

Unfortunately, we're unable to cover solicitor fees.

## **Registering a death.**

When someone passes away, their death needs to be officially registered with a certificate. This document takes a little longer to process and issue than the Doctor's certificate.

A Death Certificate can usually be obtained from the registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in your State or Territory. If you have a Funeral Director, they will ask you for the required information, and will register the death after the funeral has taken place.

If a Funeral Director isn't involved, the person managing the final arrangements is responsible for registering the death. Depending on which State or Territory you live in, a doctor or coroner is also responsible for registering the deaths.

You can find more information on this on the Australian government site here:

[www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/family-and-community/births-deaths-and-marriages-registries](http://www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/family-and-community/births-deaths-and-marriages-registries)

**Step 4**

**Who  
to notify.**

In addition to friends and family, you'll need to inform a number of organisations of your loved one's passing. These include other banks, building societies and utility companies. You'll also need to locate their legal documents, such as their passports and driver's licences, as they may need to be returned or cancelled.

To help you do this, we've put a checklist at the end of this document that details some of the financial organisations, government organisations, people and groups you may need to contact.

The easiest way to inform organisations of a death is by phone. If you have their account number or a similar reference handy before you call, it should make the process a little easier. Because each organisation is different, they will let you know if they need to see any official documents, such as a copy of the Death Certificate.

## **Why should you notify us as soon as possible?**

Fraud and identity theft are probably the last thing on your mind when you're dealing with the loss of a loved one. But sadly, opportunists often count on this. That's why it's important to let us know of their passing as soon as possible. You should also be wary of any unusual bills or an increased number of solicitations for credit card or loan offers, as they may not be legitimate.

To reduce the risk to your family at this difficult time, there are number of things you can do:

- Limit the information given in the obituary, such as birth date, mother's maiden name or other personal information.
- Send a copy of the Death Certificate to the ATO, who will flag the account as deceased. You can find more information at [www.ato.gov.au/Forms/Notification-of-a-deceased-person](http://www.ato.gov.au/Forms/Notification-of-a-deceased-person)
- Ensure the death is registered as soon as possible.
- Safeguard the Death certificate, as it is a key identity document.

### **Notifying Westpac.**

Notifying us when your loved one passes is an important step in securing their Estate and starting the process of its administration.

There are two ways to do this:

1. Call our Estate Management Specialists
2. In one of our Branches



## Documentation required to settle accounts.

Once you notify us, you must also submit at least one Proof of Death document. You can email us a copy or photo of the document or you can go into any Westpac Branch.

## What is Proof of Death document?

This could be any one of the following:

- Death Certificate.
- Doctor's Medical Certificate.
- Funeral Bill.
- Solicitor's or Coroner's Letter.
- Grant of Probate.
- Letters of Administration.
- Probate Bond.

Once we receive this document, we will place a **permanent block** on any transaction accounts owned solely by the deceased customer.

Alternative arrangements may need to be made to continue paying bills. We understand it's an extremely difficult time for families, so we'll do our best to provide you with all the support and information you need to carry out these tasks. The exception to this is home insurance, which we may continue to pay if you ask us to.

## Joint accounts.

Joint accounts will be transferred into the name of the other joint account holder(s) once we've received a certified copy of the Doctor's Death Certificate. On joint accounts where the account can be operated by either party independently, the surviving account holder will not need to be formally identified in order to access funds from their joint account(s).

## Should I close the accounts of the deceased?

If you're a joint account holder, you'll still have access to the account as per normal (except for term deposits, or if you're a secondary holder of the account). Joint accounts will be transferred into the name of the surviving joint account holder(s) once we have received a certified copy of the Death Certificate, in line with the product's terms and conditions.

The Estates Management Team will also help you to consolidate any other banking affairs you may have across our Westpac Group, which includes Westpac, St. George Bank, Bank of Melbourne, Bank of South Australia, BT Financial Group, RAMS, Capital Finance Australia Limited and Westpac General Insurance.

## Other notifications within Westpac and the Westpac Group.

As soon as we're notified of your loved one's passing, we will inform all divisions of Westpac and Westpac Group, and then let you know if you need to take any further steps regarding specific accounts. This could mean providing additional documents, or filling out forms.

After you've informed us of the death, it's possible that they might still receive mail from us for a short time. This is because some material is prepared and printed several weeks in advance. We understand that this may cause distress so, whilst we make every possible effort to avoid it, please accept our sincerest apologies if mail of this nature does arrive.

### Contacting us.

Call the Westpac Estates Team on **1300 130 240**, Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm (Sydney time).

Or if you're overseas, call **+612 9767 0722**.

By mail: **Estates Management IBN 11,  
GPO Box 3433, Sydney, NSW 2001.**

By email: **estatesmanagement@westpac.com.au**

For more information, visit: **westpac.com.au/bereavement**

## What happens to your loved one's accounts when you notify us?

1. When someone passes away, the person(s) representing their Estate will need to request a 'Certificate of Balance' from us in writing, along with identifying documents. Once we've received this, we'll provide a Certificate of Balance, which details all the accounts the deceased has with Westpac and Westpac Group.
2. We'll then start settling your loved one's accounts and releasing funds to the Executor(s), Administrator(s) or solicitor acting for the Estate.

**Step 5**

**Identifying  
yourself and/  
or beneficiaries,  
and important  
documentation.**

## Identifying yourself.

If you're not a Westpac customer and are managing the financial affairs of one of our customers, we will have to identify you. It's really important that we do this, because we need to be able to know who we're talking to and who we should be receiving Estate requests from.

To prove your identity, simply pop into any Westpac branch with at least one form of ID (e.g. a valid driver's licence, passport or birth certificate). If your documentation happens to be in a language other than English, you'll need to provide an English translation prepared by an accredited translator.

Once we've received your ID documents, we will review your loved one's accounts. Then, 7-10 business days later, you will then receive a 'Letter or Requirement' from us as part of the statement of position. This will include a reference number to quote when contacting us, as well as a list of any further information we need from you.

Depending on the value of the Estate, we might also ask for documents like the Will, Probate, Probate Bond or Letters of Administration. Once we have everything we need we'll finalise the accounts as soon as possible.

When it comes to finalising the Estate, if you've requested us to pay directly to beneficiaries (e.g. people mentioned in the Will or next-of-kin), we will need those beneficiaries to identify themselves as well. This step is mandatory, and is part of the government's Anti-Money Laundering & Anti-Terrorist Funding requirement, which was put in place to safeguard us all from fraud.

If we are finalising by bank cheque to an 'Estate of the Late' account, we don't need to identify all of the beneficiaries, but we will need to identify the person requesting the payment. This is generally the Executor or Administrator.

**Step 6**

# The Estate and important considerations.

## The Estate and important considerations.

Each Estate is unique and requires special consideration. For this reason, the time it takes to finalise accounts can vary quite a bit, depending on the complexity of the Estate and number of accounts held. Other factors can include the type of accounts held, whether a Grant of Probate is required and the time it takes for us to obtain all the necessary information.

If a person is nominated in the Will as responsible for carrying out the wishes of the Estate, they will be an 'Executor'. If no Will exists, then the immediate next-of-kin will be responsible for carrying out this task.

### **What Executors (or next-of-kin if there is no Will) have to do:**

- Make an inventory of everything in the Estate and work out the total value.
- Calculate and settle any inheritance tax and other tax liabilities.
- Apply for Probate, if required.
- Collect all assets (e.g. shares and investments) and settle any debt, including mortgages and loans.
- Sell any property or investments that the Will doesn't specifically transfer to someone else.
- Distribute the Estate to the beneficiaries.

The value of the deceased's account balances at Westpac will determine what we will need, and the process that needs to be followed when finalising the Estate. We understand that this can be a lot to take in at such a difficult time so, on the next page, we've provided a summary of the requirements by Estate value, and guidance on how the Estate can be finalised.

## Requirements to Finalise an Estate.

Total value of accounts held at Westpac	Requirements	How?
Below \$15,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death Certificate</li> </ul>	<p>This can be done in the branch as long as you have all of the documentation and relevant authorisations.</p> <p>But please note that if there are lending products involved, the branch will need to forward this request to the Estates Management Team, who will complete the request for you.</p>
Between \$15,000 and \$100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death Certificate</li> <li>• Completed and Signed Notification of Death, Funds Distribution &amp; Indemnity Form</li> <li>• And one (1) of the following, if applicable:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will</li> <li>- Grant of Probate/Letter of Administration</li> <li>- Probate Bond (if there are no lending products)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>This can still be initiated at the branch, but the staff there will forward all of the documentation to the Estates Management Team.</p> <p>The team will then go ahead and process as requested on the Notification/Indemnity form.</p> <p>In cases where there is no Grant of Probate or Letter of Administration, we will accept a written 'Letter of Direction' if it is signed by all next-of-kin.</p>
Above \$100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death Certificate</li> <li>• Completed and Signed Notification of Death, Funds Distribution &amp; Indemnity Form</li> <li>• And one (1) of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will</li> <li>- Grant of Probate/Letter of Administration</li> <li>- Probate Bond (if there are no lending products)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>This can still be initiated at the branch, but the staff there will forward all of the documentation to the Estates Management Team.</p> <p>The Team will then go ahead and process as requested on the Notification/Indemnity form.</p> <p>This form must be signed by the listed Executor, Administrator or the listed person on the Probate Bond.</p>

Here are some typical questions and answers regarding the process of managing an Estate:

## **Who is authorised to represent the Estate?**

If it's a solicitor, you'll need to ask them to write to Westpac confirming their authorisation. If the Will nominates an Executor of the Estate, we will need a certified copy of the Will to confirm this. If an Executor hasn't been appointed (or there is no Will), we will need Letters of Administration or a Probate Bond. Our Estates Management Team will let you know which one you'll need, and how to go about getting it.

For information on how to apply for Letters of Administration, we recommend that you get in touch with your solicitor. For information on Probate Bonds, and how to apply for one, we recommend contacting the Australian Probate Bonds Underwriting Agency and letting them know what you need.

If the authorised person lives overseas, they will need to get in touch with the Westpac Estates Management Team on +612 9767 0722. At this point, if we need a Probate, Letters of Administration or a Probate Bond, our Estates Management Team will advise you after we've reviewed the accounts.

## **What does an Executor do?**

The Executor (or Executrix) administers the Will. They are responsible for locating the Will, and then following its instructions for funeral requirements, collecting all assets, finalising outstanding liabilities and distributing the assets in accordance with the Deceased person's instructions.

## **Do I need a Solicitor?**

This is a decision only the family next-of-kin can make. A solicitor will help with complex issues in Estates such as trusts, bankruptcies and foreign assets - things that can be difficult to work through when you're grieving.

When deciding whether you need a solicitor or not, you might want to take into account the size of the Estate, as well as the variety of assets, including real estate and investments, the number of beneficiaries, their location and whether you anticipate any disputes.



## **What happens to a Power of Attorney?**

A Power of Attorney issued by a customer that has passed away will no longer be valid, unfortunately. This means that, once someone has passed away, you won't be able to rely on their nominated Power of Attorney to access bank accounts or conduct any other transactions on his or her behalf.

## **Who can apply for Probate?**

An Executor, Trustee, Administrator, Legal Representative or next-of-kin can apply for Probate. To start the process, the first thing they will need to do is contact the Supreme Court in the state in which their loved one's assets are held. Feel free to seek advice from Centrelink, the Public Trustee in your state or territory, or your solicitor before doing so.

If the deceased only held accounts in joint and Probate isn't needed, the personal representative may be able to deal with everything in just a few weeks. If a Probate is needed, or if any property is owned, this process can take some time.

## **Can Westpac waive the requirement for Probate or Administration?**

Yes – as long as it falls under the allowable threshold (less than \$100,000 in total), as laid out in the requirements table from earlier in this document. If you submit a request for us to waive the requirement, we will ask that all next-of-kin sign the Westpac Notification/Indemnity Form. This form will ensure that all next-of-kin are aware of the decision to waive the Probate requirement.

## **What is an 'Australian Probate Bond'?**

If you need to release cash from the Estate in lieu of a Grant Probate, you can apply for a Probate Bond. Essentially, this is a document issued by the Australian Probate Bonds Underwriting Agency (APBUA) that provides the bank with a guarantee that no financial loss will be incurred as a result of not receiving an alternative legal document, such as:

- A Grant of Probate.
- Letters of Administration.
- Reseal of Probate.

Just so you're aware, the Australian Probate Bonds Underwriting Agency is underwritten by QBE Insurance. And it's also important to note that, if real estate forms part of your loved one's Estate, you won't be able to use a Probate Bond.

## **Does Westpac follow the directives in the Will when finalising the Estate?**

No, we follow the instructions of the Executor. It's up to them to let us know how they'd like the funds to be finalised. The reason for this is that we may not always hold the entire Estate of our late customer and, therefore, we would have no clear way of understanding or fulfilling the instructions laid out in the Will.

## **Tax and Deceased Estates.**

There are no inheritance or Estate taxes in Australia. However, when a loved one dies, there are some important tax and superannuation issues for the Executor and beneficiaries to manage. These include:

- Notifying the ATO.
- Completing tax returns for the deceased.
- Completing Trust tax returns for a Deceased Estate.
- If you are a beneficiary of a Deceased Estate.

The ATO has plenty of information regarding Deceased Estates on their website, as well as a handy checklist to help you work through what needs to be done. If there are complex tax implications in the Estate, you may want to seek expert tax advice.

## **What happens with business accounts?**

Business accounts can be quite complex, depending on how they were set up. For advice on your particular situation, please feel free to contact your loved one's Business Banking Relationship Manager.

The background is a solid red color with abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of red and white. The shapes create a sense of depth and movement, with some areas appearing to be cutouts or layered on top of others. The overall composition is clean and modern.

How Westpac  
supports you.

When one of our customers passes away, we will do everything we can to make things as easy as possible for the people close to them. Once we've been notified of your loss, a letter will be sent to whoever is administering the Estate within 7-10 working days. The letter will contain details of any accounts of services held by the deceased, and what's required to finalise them. As well as this, we'll include a list of any additional information we need, and a reference number for them to quote when they contact us.

This letter is called a 'Certificate of Balance', and lays out all of the accounts the deceased has with Westpac and the Westpac Group. All parties representing the Estate will need to request a Certificate of Balance individually in writing before we can proceed.

Once we have everything we need (depending on the nature of the Estate), we'll finalise the accounts as soon as we can. Accounts will be settled and their funds will be released to the Executor(s), Administrator(s) or the solicitor acting on behalf of the Estate.

## **Joint accounts, transaction and savings accounts.**

Our Estate Management Team will be on hand to settle and close these accounts on behalf of your loved one.

### **1. What happens to transaction accounts and joint bank accounts?**

Once you've notified us with at least one Proof of Death document, a permanent block can be placed on the transaction account. Alternative arrangements may need to be made to continue to pay these bills if these accounts are solely in your loved one's name, and are the sole source of funds for dependents. In this case, we will provide you with a full list of information to help you with this task.

For joint account holders, the surviving joint holder will still have access to the account (credits and debits) as per normal, unless it's a Term Deposit or if the joint holder is named as a secondary account holder. The surviving joint account holder will not need to be formally identified in order to access funds from their account, either. The account(s) will be transferred into the name of the surviving account holder once we have received a certified copy of the Death Certificate, in keeping with the product's terms and conditions. In some instances, we might be able to change the type of account in order to do this, as the account may no longer be available. In this case, we will select the newer product that corresponds best with the account they had.

As we mentioned earlier, we aren't able to do this for Term Deposits, because there are tax implications. And wherever two or more signatures are required to operate the account, different restrictions also apply. If you'd like clarity on any of these restrictions and/or requirements, just pop into a Westpac branch. We'd be happy to talk you through any questions you might have.

## **2. How do I cancel or change a direct debit (automatic payment)?**

If the transaction account is still open, Westpac will provide you with a full list of the direct debits attached to it. This is called a 'Regular Payment Summary' and will be mailed to you if you happen to be the authorised representative of the deceased. To request a copy, simply contact your local Westpac branch. It should arrive within 5-7 business days. If the transaction account is held solely in your loved one's name, a restriction will be placed on the account to prevent further direct debits going through. Direct Debits on a credit card won't be stopped. You'll need to contact each creditor individually to cancel the payments attached to your loved one's card.

If the account is already closed, we can provide you with copies of the last 12 months of statements for both a transaction account or a credit card facility. Once you've got this, you can use it to figure out which organisations you need to contact. These could include gyms, telephone accounts, insurance companies or annual subscriptions. If you're finding it difficult to deal with an organisation or supplier, we may be able to help. Just give us a call or visit your local branch.

## **3. What will happen to the deceased's term deposit?**

In some cases, we will be able to release funds before the term deposit has reached maturity once we've received the documentation we need. All fees and charges will of course be waived, and interest accrued up until the date of closure will be paid in full.

## Credit cards and home loans.

### **1. The deceased held a credit card. What will happen to the amount owing?**

If your loved one has left an outstanding debt on their credit card, our team will send you a letter advising you of the details, and what we require before we can close the account. Wherever possible, we will offset the credit card debt using the funds from the deceased's savings or transaction account (in line with the product's terms and conditions). However, you'll need to cancel any existing direct debits attached to the card.

If the deceased was the primary cardholder, the card will need to be cancelled. This will automatically cancel any secondary cardholder's cards as well. We understand this will be an inconvenience for secondary cardholders who might be relying on these cards for their own purchases. So, with this in mind, we will assist the secondary cardholder in any way we can and help them find a solution, or choose a new card.

### **2. The credit card was an Altitude card and had Altitude Points. What happens to the points?**

Westpac will redeem the Altitude points for cash, and will then credit that cash to the deceased's card(s). This should take about four weeks from when we receive notification of their passing. Also, keep in mind that we are unable to transfer the points for tax reasons. The points must form part of the Estate and be disbursed with all other assets, as outlined in the Will. If the card was closed prior to their passing, any available points would have been forfeited and will therefore no longer be redeemable.

### **3. My loved one and I have a home loan together. What happens to it?**

You will need to continue paying for your loan, and interest will continue to accrue on it until it is finalised. If you need his or her name removed from the title deeds, get in touch with your local or preferred solicitor and they will be able to provide you with the guidance you need. If you are unable to make your regular repayments, or foresee difficulty making them, please call Customer Assist, and they may be able to help.

## Life insurance, superannuation, investments & other banks.

### **Making a funeral or life insurance claim.**

If our customer held an Estate Plan with Westpac, the funds will usually be released within a few days of submitting the claim.

**Step 1:** Call us on 131 817 and tell us about what prompted your claim. From there, you'll be assigned your own Claims Consultant, who will guide you through every step of the process. Our lines are open Monday to Friday, from 8.00am to 6.30pm (Sydney time).

**Step 2:** A Claims Kit will then be mailed out to you. Inside, you'll find important forms that you'll need to complete, and a range of helpful information to help you with your claim.

**Step 3:** Collect information. We will let your financial adviser know that you need to make a claim on your policy so that they can support you through the process. If you would prefer us not to contact your financial adviser, just let us know. Otherwise, just fill out the forms in your Claims Kit. Depending on the type of claim you are making, some of the forms may need to be completed by your medical or financial professional. It's your responsibility to arrange for these professionals to complete the form for you. Please read the forms carefully as they may ask you to attach additional information with the forms, e.g. Birth Certificate, Marriage Certificate, Death Certificate. Please return the completed form to: **Westpac Life Claims, GPO Box 524, Sydney NSW 2001.**

**Step 4:** Assessing the claim. Your Claims Consultant will review all the information you have provided, and make an initial assessment of your claim. They will then call you to discuss the assessment. We will also send you a letter to confirm the details of your claim and provide you with the contact details of your Claims Consultant.

**Step 5:** Decision. If the claim has been approved, we will arrange your payment by direct deposit or cheque. We will call you to confirm that your payment has been processed. Claims payments can often be very large lump sums. You may wish to discuss the best way to use your payment with your financial adviser. Payments under a life insurance policy may be made to the spouse of the deceased, or someone mentioned in the Will, or someone entitled under the intestacy provisions, up to a maximum of \$50,000 (without the need for a grant of Probate or Letters of Administration).

Please note: If our late customer held a Westpac or BT Financial Group policy, and premiums have been debited after the date of their death, you will need to notify us so arrangements can be made for reimbursement.

## What happens with superannuation?

If your loved one has a Will, it might list their specific wishes, or have binding death benefit nominations around their superannuation. If not, superannuation law determines who's eligible to receive death benefits from the fund. These individuals are beneficiaries of a deceased member, and can be either a 'dependant' or the Legal Personal Representative (LPR) of the member as defined by superannuation law, and at the time of the member's death.

### **Dependants are known as SIS (Superannuation Industry Supervision) dependants, and include:**

- Spouse of the member.
- Child of the member (any age).
- Financial dependant.
- A person with whom the member had an interdependent relationship.

Additionally, superannuation death benefits can be paid to the Estate or Legal Personal Representative (LPR) of the deceased member. In cases where a loved one would like their parents or siblings to receive their death benefits, then they could consider nominating their Estate or Legal Personal Representative (LPR) as the beneficiary of the superannuation death benefit, and directing the payment to them via their Will. We would, however, suggest seeking further advice before changing beneficiaries.

For Westpac and/or BT Financial Group's superannuation funds, you will be required to complete a Death Benefit Information Form (we can give this to you), and provide a certified copy of the Death Certificate. In most cases, you will also need to provide a certified copy of the Will and a Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration (where there is no Will). For superannuation funds held elsewhere, you will need to contact the Trustee and/or Administrator of the superannuation fund for details about their death benefit notification requirements.



## **What happens to other wealth products?**

If your loved one directly owned shares or other wealth products issues by BT Financial Group - but didn't mention them in his or her Will - you can contact your local State Revenue offices or the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (as applicable) to search for any lost money or assets. In the case of shares, many of the larger listed companies in Australia use the share registry services of two firms: Computershare or Link Market Services. You can contact these registries (or the relevant share registry for the share owned) to find out whether your loved one held any shares with them.

If you're unsure, you might want to contact the issuer of the shares for more information. Just be aware that they will require the necessary identification and documentation from you (as mentioned earlier in this guide) in order to provide you with the information you need.

## **What happens to Trust accounts?**

This can vary considerably from case to case. If your loved one held a trust account and you are a beneficiary, we recommend that you seek independent financial and/or legal advice. You'll then need to visit one of our branches to make changes to the trust account.

## **BT Financial Group Estate and Claims Management Team.**

The Estate & Claims Management team is responsible for managing the end-to-end customer experience for BT Financial Group customers following notification of death, divorce, financial hardship, total and permanent disability or illness. They understand that this is a very difficult time, and will do everything they can to help, and make sure your individual circumstances are met during your time of need.

For assistance, please call **1300 366 426**.

## **Assessing your own financial affairs after the death of a loved one.**

When someone close to you passes away, it can shine a light on your own financial affairs, or change your situation so significantly that you need to update your plans. If you would like information about your finances or some of the options available to you, please just let us know. We'll be more than happy to assist you.

The background is a solid red color with abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of red and white. The shapes create a dynamic, layered effect, with some areas appearing darker or lighter due to the overlap. The overall composition is modern and minimalist.

# Frequently Asked Questions.

## **My loved one has recently passed away. What do I do now?**

We hope that this step-by-step guide will be useful to you at this difficult time. You can access it online or download a copy so that you can share it with family members or anyone else who might be involved. It's also important that you get in touch with us as soon as you can and provide us with a certified copy of the Proof of Death and a Will (if one exists), so that we can start to help you through this process. You can do this over the phone or in person at one of our branches.

## **What if there is no Will?**

If a Will doesn't exist, the next-of-kin will need to act on behalf of the Estate, or an Administrator will need to be appointed by the Supreme Court in the State or Territory where the assets are held. To get the ball rolling, contact your local branch with the Death Certificate, and explain to them that a Will has not been located. More information on this can be found earlier in this guide at Step 2: Locating the Will.

## **Should I close the accounts of the deceased.**

There are some things you'll need to check first. It's highly likely that payments will need to be made to your loved one's accounts in the months following their passing. These could be anything from Superannuation benefits to tax refunds, shares or lost super cheques in the deceased person's name. If an account is closed, it might need to be re-opened in the name of the deceased. This can be a time-consuming process. Keeping their accounts open also means that funds can be easily accepted into the Estate.

## **I have Power of Attorney over the deceased's accounts. Does this still stand after their passing?**

Unfortunately not. All power of Attorneys, Guardianships and authorised signatories cease once a person has passed away. Only the next-of-kin, Executor, Administrator or legal representative will be able to deal with the bank regarding your loved one's accounts once they've passed away.

### **When will I need Probate or Letters of Administration?**

Each Estate's individual circumstances are assessed by us and, in some cases, we may need Probate or Letters of Administration to be granted before we can release the funds. If this is the case, we will let you know in writing.

### **Where do I get a Death Certificate?**

A Death Certificate can usually be obtained from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in your state or territory. For more on this, refer to Step 3: Funeral or memorial arrangements and registering the death.

### **How long will it take to release Estate funds held in bank accounts?**

Because each person's circumstances are unique, the amount of time it takes to settle a Deceased Estate can vary quite a lot. In saying that, the earlier we receive all of the documentation we need, the quicker we will be able to process the request. This is covered in more detail on P27: 'How Westpac supports you.'

### **Why do I need to be identified by Westpac?**

This is actually a legal requirement under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Act, which essentially says that all signatories must be identified if instructing a financial institution about a Deceased Estate's funds before any money can be released. This law is in place to protect us all from fraud while we may be more focussed on more important things. For more on this, refer to Step 5: Identifying yourself.

### **What do I do if Westpac is still sending mail to the deceased?**

It's normal to receive a final statement showing a nil balance for any transaction account once it's been finalised. Also, when accounts have a debit or small credit balance, you'll continue to receive statements until the balance is nil. If you continue to receive mail in your loved one's name beyond this point, please let our Estates Management Team know.

## **What is Safe Custody?**

Safe Custody is the safe keeping of important documents and valuables. Items commonly requested by customers to be held in safe custody by the bank can include property deeds, a Will and other valuable documents. If you require access to a safety deposit box to get the Will, you will need at least one of the Proof of Death documents (i.e. a Medical Certificate, Death Certificate, Funeral Bill, Solicitor or Coroner's Letter, Grant of Probate, Letters of Administration or a Probate Bond).

When accessing the safety deposit box, two bankers will be with you.

Please also keep in mind that you'll only be able to remove the Will if you are named as an Executor of the Will, or can prove that you're an authorised nominee of the Executor(s).

# Checklist.

Organisations	Reference/ Member number	Phone Number	Date posted/ person spoken to
<b>Government</b>			
Centrelink		132 300	
Medicare		132 011	
ATO		132 865	
Child Support services		131 272	
Veterans' Affairs		133 254	
Local Council			
Local Post Office			
Local Library			
Australian Electoral Commission		132 326	
Foreign pension authority (if unknown contact Centrelink's International Services)		131 673	
<b>Utilities &amp; housing</b>			
Landlord/tenants			
Home Phone			
Mobile Phone			
Internet			
Gas			
Water			
Electricity			
Entertainment (Foxtel)			

Organisations	Reference/ Member number	Phone Number	Date posted/ person spoken to
<b>Bank accounts</b>			
St.George		02 9767 1164	
Westpac		1300 130 240	
CBA		13 22 21	
ANZ		13 13 14	
NAB		13 22 65	
<b>Credit/store cards</b>			
<b>Loans</b>			



Organisations	Reference/ Member number	Phone Number	Date posted/ person spoken to
<b>Superannuation</b>			
Policy 1			
Policy 2			
Policy 3			
<b>Insurances</b>			
<b>Other financials</b>			
Funeral Bonds			
Funeral Insurance			
Shares			
Term Deposits			
Safety deposit box			
<b>Insurances</b>			
Health Insurance			
Home Insurance: If property is now empty, the provider will have certain requirements to continue the insurance.			
Policy 1			
Policy 2			
Policy 3			
Car Insurance: If insured under the deceased's policy, you will no longer be legally covered to drive.			
Policy 1			
Policy 2			
Policy 3			

Organisations	Reference/ Member number	Phone Number	Date posted/ person spoken to
Life Insurance: This may be within superannuation policies or a stand-alone policy.			
Policy 1			
Policy 2			
Policy 3			
Income protection			
Trauma/TPD			
Landlord insurance			
Business Insurance			
Credit card insurance			
<b>Others</b>			
Religious adviser/ leader			
Clubs (e.g. RSL, Gym)			
Employers/Past Employers			
Travel tickets/smart cards			
ADMA - removing name from mailing lists		ADMA GPO Box 3895 Sydney NSW 2001	
State Vehicle Registration			
Health professionals: (e.g. doctor, physiotherapist, dentist, podiatrist, optometrist)			

# Glossary.

### **Administrator.**

Person or persons legally authorised by Letters of Administration to administer the Estate when there is no Will or when there is a problem with the Executor named in the Will.

### **Beneficiary.**

A person who is left something in a Will, or a person for whose benefit property is held by Trustees or Executors.

### **Certificate of Balance.**

List of accounts held by the Deceased containing balances and accrued (but unpaid) interest amounts as at date of death.

### **Certificate of Death.**

An official certified copy of the information registered when someone passes away, including the date, place and cause of death.

### **Deceased Estate or Estate.**

The property and assets belonging to a person who has died is called their Deceased Estate. The Deceased Estate is held in trust from the death of the person until the transfer of the property and assets to the beneficiaries.

### **Executor.**

Person or persons nominated in a Will to administer the Estate on behalf of beneficiaries of the deceased. The Executor administers the Will. They are responsible for locating the Will and following the Will's instructions for funeral requirements, collecting all assets, finalising outstanding liabilities and distributing the assets in accordance with the deceased person's instructions.

An Executrix is the name used for a female Executor.

### **Funeral Bond.**

A Funeral Bond allows you to set aside an amount of money to cover your funeral expenses and, if you wish, specify how your funeral is to be conducted.

If the customer had a Funeral Bond, be sure to contact the provider.

## **Intestate.**

When a person passes away without a valid Will they are said to die 'intestate'.

## **Letters of Administration.**

Letters of Administration refers to a certificate issued by the Supreme Court that authorises a person to act as an Administrator when there is no Will or when there is a problem with the Executor named in the Will.

## **Power of Attorney.**

A Power of Attorney is a formal instruction whereby a person (who is called the Donor) appoints another person (called the Attorney) to act on their behalf. Power of Attorney ends with the death of the Donor.

## **Probate.**

Order granted by State Supreme Courts confirming the identified Will is the true and last Will of the deceased, and declaring the Executor/s are lawfully entitled to finalise any Deceased Estate matter within the state the Probate is granted only. Probate is usually required when there is a large sum of money or assets involved and particularly when there are multiple beneficiaries.

## **Tax Invoice.**

A tax invoice is an original invoice as identified by Australian GST taxation legislation. The requirements vary depending on the total taxable sales but items the invoice must include are: the words 'tax invoice' stated prominently; the name of the supplier; the ABN of the supplier; the date of issue of the tax invoice; the brief description of the service provided; and the total price invoiced (including GST).

## **Tax Receipt.**

A tax receipt must include the same information listed under tax invoice above, and be presented in the form of a receipt or, alternatively, an invoice which has been stamped and dated as 'Paid'.

## **Testamentary Trust.**

A Testamentary Trust is a trust established by a Will. It does not come into effect until after the death of the person making the Will. At this point, specified deceased Estate property is transferred to a Trustee who holds the assets in trust for the beneficiaries. A Testamentary Trust is not the same trust as the Deceased Estate. A Testamentary Trust may last for many years after the Estate has been fully administered. The information provided within this document does not apply to Testamentary Trusts. Additional information about Testamentary Trusts can be found on the Australian Taxation Office website at [ato.gov.au](http://ato.gov.au)

## **Will.**

A Will is a legal document that contains information on who receives assets and belongings after a death. A Will can also be used to appoint a guardian to look after children until they are old enough to look after themselves.

# Contacts.

## **Need to contact our support team?**

You can call the Estates Management Team on **1300 130 240**

Monday to Friday 9:00am - 5pm (Sydney time).

If you are calling from overseas, call **+612 9767 0722**

The Estates Management Team can help you consolidate any other banking matters you may have across our Westpac Group: St.George Bank, Westpac Bank, Bank of South Australia, Bank of Melbourne, BT Financial Group, RAMS, Capital Finance Australia Limited and Westpac General Insurance.

## For more information:

 Estatesmanagement@westpac.com.au

 Westpac Bank  
Estates Management IBN 11,  
GPO Box 3433, Sydney, NSW 2001

 [westpac.com.au/bereavement](http://westpac.com.au/bereavement)



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