



Bringing In or Exporting Human Remains or Ashes

General information

If you intend to bring human remains or ashes into or out of Australia, it may be helpful to contact a funeral director or a customs broker to assist you with the process.

Funeral directors and customs brokers can be located through local telephone directories or via an internet search. It is important to be aware of and have in place all arrival and export conditions/requirements, **before** movement of human remains.

You also need to follow the requirements of the relevant state or territory health authority for human remains and any additional requirements or guidance in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Isolated human tissues, fluids and cells are regulated as goods and there are different importation requirements for them. For more information, refer to the [Department of Agriculture's BICON information](#).

Requirements for bringing human ashes into Australia or exporting ashes out of Australia

There are no requirements for bringing human ashes into Australia or exporting ashes out of Australia. However, the container used to hold the ashes should be free from contaminants such as soil, and containers made from wood must be declared to Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (Agriculture) on arrival or before departure.

Most international airlines do allow human ashes to be carried by passengers on international flights. In this case, it is recommended that you contact the airline or shipping line prior to travelling as they may have requirements to be met when human ashes are carried by a passenger or included in luggage.

You do not need to declare human ashes on arrival in Australia through the Incoming Passenger Card.

We recommend you check with the country the ashes will be brought from for their export requirements. A list of foreign embassies and consulates in Australia



can be found on the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website](#). A list of Australian consulates overseas can be found on the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website](#).

Postage of human ashes into and out of Australia

If the human ashes are to be sent via post, please check with [Australia Post](#) for any requirements.

While there are no restrictions on the postage of human ashes from a Department of Health perspective, many shipping companies' internal policies will not allow the postage of human ashes. This will be at the discretion of each individual business.

It should be noted that international postage of human ashes will be determined by the regulation of the destination country. We recommend you check with the country the ashes will be posted to or from for their postal requirements. A list of foreign embassies and consulates in Australia can be found on the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website](#).

General requirements for bringing human remains (other than ashes) into Australia

Human remains can pose a potential risk to human health. To manage this risk, there are certain legal requirements¹ which must be met for bringing them into Australia.

Cremated human remains (ashes) do not pose a biosecurity risk and are not considered "human remains".

Human remains (other than clean human hair, teeth or bone) being brought into Australia must be transported in a hermetically sealed container (meaning an airtight container that bodily fluids cannot leak from when sealed). Other aviation transport conditions may apply and it is advised that you discuss any additional requirements with the airline that will be transporting the remains.

If you intend to bring human remains or ashes into Australia you should also be aware of any export requirements of the country from where the remains are to be exported. The source country may have specific requirements or conditions associated with the movement or export of human remains or ashes. It is recommended that you contact the relevant authority or embassy regarding export requirements that may be in place. A list of foreign embassies and consulates in Australia can be found on the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website](#).

¹ Biosecurity (Managing Human remains) Instrument 2016 under subsection 110(2) of the Biosecurity Act 2015



Requirements for bringing in human remains for burial or cremation

Human remains being brought into Australia for burial or cremation must be accompanied by official documentation as follows:

- an official copy of an official certificate in which the cause of death is specified; **OR**
- an official extract from an entry in an official register in which the cause of death is specified; **OR**
- an official copy of an official embalming certificate (if applicable); **OR**
- a certificate from a medical practitioner which states:
 - if the body or body part has, or had before death, signs or symptoms of a [listed human disease](#)² and the name of the listed human disease; **OR**
 - that the body or body part does not have, or did not have before death have, signs or symptoms of a listed human disease.

The process can be facilitated by a funeral director or a customs broker.

Documentation should be in **English** or accompanied by a certified translated copy.

Human remains not accompanied by the required official documentation will need the permission of a Commonwealth Human Biosecurity Officer (HBO) in order to be brought into Australia. More information about gaining permission from a Commonwealth HBO can be obtained by contacting the Department of Health via the [Human Biosecurity Inbox \(humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au\)](mailto:humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au).

The Agriculture office at the point of entry must be notified at least 48 hours prior to arrival of the remains. The contact details can be found on the Agriculture website – [Office locations](#).

Some additional requirements may apply which can be found on the [Biosecurity Import Conditions database \(BICON\)](#) maintained by Agriculture.

Requirements for bringing in human remains with a COVID-19 risk for burial and cremation

The cremation of the remains of a person infected with COVID-19 before transport to Australia is preferred (where it is culturally appropriate), but it is not mandatory.

² Biosecurity (Listed Human Diseases) Determination 2016 under subsection 42(1) of the Biosecurity Act 2015



For non-cremated remains, the requirements are the same as for all other human remains being brought into Australian territory, refer to '[Requirements for bringing in human remains for burial or cremation](#)'.

When the remains come into Australia an additional process will automatically occur because COVID-19 is a [listed human disease](#). A state or territory health official, known as a Human Biosecurity Officer, will be told of the remains arrival, and may give extra directions to the person responsible for the remains (e.g. funeral home) about how the remains should be transported and handled. This process will automatically happen when the remains arrive in Australia.

As per normal processes, the Agriculture office at the point of entry must be notified at least 48 hours prior to arrival of the remains. The contact details can be found on the [Agriculture website – Office locations](#).

Further information for funeral homes can be found on the [Department of Health website](#).

Human remains brought in for scientific or research purposes (including for teaching purposes)

A written declaration **OR** the permission of a Commonwealth HBO will be required in order for the remains to be brought into Australia. The written declaration must be from the person bringing in the body or body part and must state:

- that the body or part of the body has been donated for scientific or research purposes; and
- either:
 - if the person is aware that the body or part of the body has, or had before death, signs or symptoms of a listed human disease and the name of the listed human disease; **OR**
 - that, as far as the person is aware, the body or part of the body does not have, or did not before death have, any signs or symptoms of a listed human disease.

If a written declaration cannot be provided, the permission of a Commonwealth HBO will be required in order for the remains to be brought into Australia. More information about gaining permission from a Commonwealth HBO can be obtained by contacting the Department of Health via the [Human Biosecurity Inbox \(humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au\)](mailto:humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au).



The Agriculture office at the point of entry should be notified at least 48 hours prior to arrival of the remains. The contact details can be found on the Agriculture website – [Office locations](#).

In the current global COVID-19 situation, it is highly recommended that institutions bringing in human remains for scientific and research purposes seek assurance from the supplier that the remains are free from COVID-19. It is recommended that importation should only proceed where suitable screening and testing procedures are in place for COVID-19, especially from countries where there is widespread community transmission.

The Department of Health has developed guidance for the use of Class 2 human remains in relation to COVID-19 risk:

[Fact sheet - COVID-19 Guidance for using human remains for teaching, scientific and research purposes](#) - PDF 329 KB

[Fact sheet - COVID-19 Guidance for using human remains for teaching, scientific and research purposes](#) - Word 205 KB

Human remains brought in for purposes other than burial, cremation, scientific or research purposes (e.g. for display or as curios)

The permission of a Commonwealth HBO will be required in order for the remains to be brought into Australia. Please contact the Department of Health via the [Human Biosecurity Inbox](mailto:humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au) (humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au) for further details.

The Agriculture office at the point of entry should be notified at least 48 hours prior to arrival of the remains. The contact details can be found on the Agriculture website – [Office locations](#).

Hair, teeth or bones of a deceased human's body

Hair, teeth or bones of a deceased human's body (other than as part of a deceased human's body or a part of a deceased human's body) brought into Australia must be clean and have no adhering tissue, blood or faeces.

Hair, teeth or bones not meeting these requirements will need the permission of a Commonwealth HBO in order to be brought into Australia.



Please contact the Department of Health via the [Human Biosecurity Inbox](#) (humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au) for further details.

On-arrival processes for bringing in human remains

Human remains arriving in Australia are cleared by the Department of Home Affairs following assessment by Agriculture.

If the remains are suspected or confirmed to have a [listed human disease](#), then a Human Biosecurity Officer will give directions to the person bringing in the remains (e.g. funeral home or university) about how to handle the remains.

- The advice will be provided to the person bringing in the remains as written directions under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.
- The remains must not be unsealed or otherwise handled until this advice has been received.
- It is recommended that you advise the Department of Agriculture if there is a listed human disease risk prior to arrival of the remains to prevent delays in being able to unseal and handle the remains.

Once cleared, human remains brought in for burial or cremation must be transported under the direction or control of a coroner or funeral director and handled by trained personnel using infection control procedures. Human remains brought in for scientific or research purposes must be transported by trained personnel using infection control procedures to an appropriate containment facility.

The person responsible for making the arrangements to bring in or export human remains should seek advice from local state health authorities regarding administrative processes and document requirements.

Export of human remains

There are no export requirements for transporting human remains out of Australia. There is no need to make an export declaration when human remains are exported from Australia for burial or cremation³.

If you intend to export human remains from Australia you should check with the embassy or health authority of the destination country regarding any import requirements or conditions that may be in place. A list of foreign embassies and consulates in Australia can be found on the [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website](#).

³ Regulation 8 of the *Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulation 1958* does not apply to human remains destined for interment or other religious or cultural ceremonies for the deceased to take place outside Australia.



You should also consider if the remains fall under the category of Cultural Heritage (refer to 'Movable cultural heritage').

Movable cultural heritage

Certain human remains may fall under the category of cultural heritage. Human remains of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (including bark and log coffins used in ceremonial burial) cannot be exported.

Other human remains that have been removed from their place of discovery for 50 years or more may require a permit to be exported. For more information regarding movable cultural heritage requirements including Indigenous remains visit the [Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications \(Office of the Arts\) website](#).

For more information

For more information on human biosecurity requirements contact the Department of Health on:

- Telephone: 1800 020 103 (Free call) or 02 6289 1555
- Email: enquiries@health.gov.au or humanbiosecurity@health.gov.au

For further information on requirements for bringing human remains into Australia, visit the [Agriculture BICON database](#) or contact Agriculture on:

- Telephone: 1800 900 090
- Email: arrivals@agriculture.gov.au

For further information on customs related matters please visit [Australian Border Force](#). Out of hours cargo clearance can be requested through Cargo Support on **1300 558 099**.