

Putting the "fun" back in funerals?

 By [Bronwyn Williams](#)

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The emerging "end of life celebration industry" has more in common with the wedding industry than it does with the serious funeral services of yore. From Asia to America, funeral parlours are putting in dance floors and acquired liquor licences to adapt to changing consumer tastes and demands for increasingly elaborate funeral send-offs to honour the recently departed.



Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

Personalised send-offs

In particular, there is a trend towards personalised funerals that reflect the guest of honour's personality and personal wishes. According to industry insiders, pub funerals, memorial festivals and wake concerts are among the more popular choices for a funeral to end all funerals.

"Services are more life-centered, around the person's personality, likes and dislikes. They're unique and not standardised. The only way we can survive is to provide the services that families find meaningful." ~ Former American funeral association president Mark Musgrove

Celebration of life planners

To attend to this emerging market for more elaborate funerals, new job opportunities are arising: "celebration-of-life planners" and "funeral consultants" are essentially party planners for high-end, personalised experiential funerals. Final Bow Productions and The Inspired Funeral, for example, are both American events company that specialised in throwing elaborate memorial events.

"None of us is going to get out of this alive. We can't control how or when we die, but we can say how we want to be remembered." ~ Alison Bossert, Founder, Final Bow Productions

Destination funerals

Destination funerals and memorials are also growing in popularity. Hawaii Ash Scatterings is a company that performs 600 cremains dispersals a year for as many as 80 passengers on its tropical cruises that commonly feature ukulele players,

conch-shell blowers and releases of white doves or monarch butterflies. The company is growing at a market-beating rate of 15% to 20% a year.

DIY funerals

Other eventing vendors offer their services to still living clients to allow the future guest of honour to plan their own send-off:

Good to Go parties host monthly funeral-planning events where the living meet to come to terms with their own mortality and plan their own post-life send off in creative detail.

Living funerals, where the memorial celebration is held while the elderly or terminally ill guest of honour is still alive and present to enjoy the attention is a related growing trend

Deathday rituals

Of course, the funeral eventing industry knows how to milk the trend for all its worth. Funeral eventing companies are now also encouraging grieving families to take advantage of their services to arrange annual death-day ritual events on the anniversary of a loved one's death. At these death day affairs, the deceased person is remembered through a ritual ceremony, similar to the way they were honoured on their birthday every year while they were still living.

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