



A Practical Reference to Religious and Spiritual Diversity For Operational Police

3rd Edition



ANZPAA

Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency

For more information please refer to the
Religious and Spiritual Diversity:
A Guide for Police-A5 handbook



Key Topics

Protocols for dealing with strangers

Special considerations when approaching or entering a place of worship or person's house; or acknowledging or searching sacred objects

Special clothing, jewellery or ornaments

Death, bereavement and mourning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

- **Greeting:** Initially, same sex communication
 - **Silence:** Important part of communication
 - **Handshaking:** Not generally given
 - **Touching:** Usually viewed as inappropriate
 - **Eye contact:** Common to lower eyes to show respect
 - **Pointing:** Using the finger is seen as disrespectful
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- Approval from Traditional Owners, local elders and/or government authority
 - Follow local protocols (eg: men attending sacred men's sites)
 - Modest attire
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- Ceremonial items during secret or sacred ceremonies
 - String sometimes worn by family members during bereavement
 - Care when touching
 - Standard protocols for searching and detention apply
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- Traditional Aboriginal belief that death is caused by another person (no natural death)
 - Bereavement (sorry business) may take precedence over all else
 - **Marigeth** (in-laws) often announce a death amongst Torres Strait Islanders
 - Requesting to keep the deceased for a time to prepare is common in Aboriginal communities
 - Spending considerable time with the deceased is common in Torres Strait Island communities
 - Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law
 - Performing a smoking ceremony is common in Aboriginal communities

Bahá'í

None

- Contact guides

No

- Family members may wish to place a burial ring on the deceased
- Preference is that the deceased is not be transported more than one hour's travelling distance
- Cremation is forbidden
- Burial is preferred to take place as soon as reasonably possible
- Burial is preferred to take place within one hour's travelling distance

Buddhism

- **Handshaking:** Not appropriate with monks or nuns
- **Touching:** Not appropriate with monks or nuns
- **The head:** Not appropriate to touch the head

- Contact head monk or nun
- Remove weapons where safe
- Care when seated facing religious objects
- Lift religious objects by base

- Monks and nuns may have short/shaved hair, wear robes
- Threaded beads (**mala**) sometimes carried
- Care when touching
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact Buddhist monk or nun, and maintain a peaceful environment
- Some may request that the body be left undisturbed for up to eight hours
- Chinese, Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhists would generally prefer to stay with the deceased

Christianity

None

- Remove weapons where safe
 - Modest attire
 - Care when touching the altar
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- Religious leaders often wear robes/other religious clothing
 - Threaded beads (rosary beads) sometimes carried
 - Standard protocols for searching and detention apply
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- Some may want a priest or other clergy member to give 'last rites' (prayers)

Hindu

- **Handshaking:** Not appropriate with observant Hindus
- **Eye contact:** Not appropriate in some traditions between males and females
- **Hands:** Left hand not used for general interaction
- **Pointing at people:** Usually viewed as disrespectful

- Remove hats and shoes
- Seek assistance when handling objects
- Food offered

- Married Hindu women may wear a necklace (**mangalsutra**) or wedding bangles; and a marking over third eye (**bindi** or **pottu**)
- Thread sometimes worn around body
- Care when touching
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact the Hindu community
- Place the deceased in a north-south direction with the head pointing towards the south
- Some may prefer identification by a senior male relative
- Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law
- Hindus are usually cremated, except for children under three, who are buried
- Cremation is preferred within 24 hours of death
- Some may want the deceased to go home before cremation

Islam

- **Handshaking:** Not appropriate between males and females with observant Muslims
- **Hands:** Left hand not used for general interaction
- **Eye contact:** Sustained contact often not appropriate
- **Comforting:** Avoid physical contact

- Contact Imam of mosque
- Modest attire
- Remove shoes
- Avoid walking in front of Muslims while praying

- Muslim women may wear the following: headscarf (**Hijab**); face veil (**Niqab**); covering for the whole body (**Burqa**); and covering for the whole body thrown over the head (**Chador**)
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Burial is preferred within 24 hours of death
- A mourning period of 40 days is generally observed by the family of the deceased
- Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law

Judaism

- **Handshaking:** Not appropriate with many Orthodox Jews
- **Physical contact:** Not appropriate with many Orthodox Jews

- Contact security at Synagogue

- Orthodox men may dress in black, wear hats, and grow beards and earlocks
- Orthodox women may wear wigs and long dresses
- Jewish men often wear a skullcap (**kippah**)
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact immediate family or a Rabbi, and the Jewish Burial Society (**Chevra Kadisha**)
- Strict observance of religious practices in relation to death and burial
- Preference that touching of the deceased is kept to a minimum, and the deceased is covered or screened
- Preference that all body parts, including tissue and blood, be retrieved for burial with the body
- Preference is not to have post mortems conducted unless required by law
- Cremation is forbidden
- Burial is preferred within 24 hours of death

Māori

- **Touching:** Not appropriate to touch the head
- **Eye contact:** Minimal eye contact common

- Remove shoes

- Green stone (**pounamu**) and/or bone necklaces sometimes worn
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact members of the Māori community to allow for blessing of the area before the body is moved, particularly in the event of suicides
- Preference that all body parts be kept together
- Common for the community to gather around the **tūpāpaku** (deceased) so it is not left on its own at any stage
- Pictures of the living should not be placed with the deceased

Sikhism

- **Handshaking:** Sometimes viewed as inappropriate between males & females
- **Touching:** Sometimes viewed as inappropriate between males & females
- **The head:** Not appropriate to touch the head or turban

- Contact community leaders
- Remove shoes
- Care when touching the Sikh Holy Script

- Some Sikhs wear a turban
- Some Sikhs wear 5 articles of faith (**Five Ks**): a small sacred sword (**Kirpan**); an iron bangle (**Kara**); a special undergarment (**Kachera**); a small wooden comb (**Kanga**); and uncut hair (**Keshas**)
- Care when touching these; removal from the body is viewed as a severe punishment
- Standard protocols for searching and detention apply

- Contact family of the deceased
- Care when touching the deceased where the 5 Ks and/or turban are worn; preference is that the Five Ks are not removed from the deceased at the scene or during post mortem
- Where the 5 Ks are removed, care should be taken to replace them
- Sikhs are cremated, and cremation is preferred as soon as possible after death
- Some may want the deceased to go home before cremation

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