

# Service helps families heal

SAYING a final goodbye to someone is never easy, but increasingly what used to be a solemn affair is now becoming more of a celebration.

“With the changing perceptions of life and death, grief and closure, families have turned to wanting to memorialise and celebrate the life of a loved one,” Brownjohn Memorial Home’s Tom Brownjohn said.

“While these can reflect upon the life of the deceased, funerals are not solely for the deceased.”

He said that the ritual of the memorial ceremony and celebration serves several purposes.

“It helps mourners recognise the loss as real. I strongly suggests that the deceased be present at the service as it helps the grieving process. Still, we know that we are there to acknowledge that someone has passed away, and to acknowledge the death not just in fact, but in feeling.

“We come together to grieve in the presence of a caring community, and for the time of the ceremony and



**IMPORTANT RITUAL:** “We are there to acknowledge that someone has passed away, and to acknowledge the death not just in fact, but in feeling,” Mr Brownjohn said.

celebration we have permission to give ourselves to the experience of loss,” he said.

He said the service was also “a time to celebrate all the wonderful things the deceased gave both to their family and community.”

Indeed so much does Mr Brownjohn believe that classifying the service as a funeral has negative connotations, that after nearly two decades in Katoomba, Brownjohn Family Funerals not only changed its name to TR Brownjohn Memorial Home but also its whole approach to how the family and loved ones celebrate the life of the deceased.

This encompasses offering a complete concierge service to the family.

“Our concierge service really encompasses all the needs of the deceased and the families in this time of need and the grief that they feel.

“If the celebration has not been pre-planned then we guide the family through all the details of organising the memorial service and celebration,” he said.

“There are no rules or formal structures when it comes to planning a memorial service. Of course, you may opt for a religious service, which follows all the traditional

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We also gather to celebrate the life that is now gone from us, to recollect and to remember, as in 'to make whole again'.

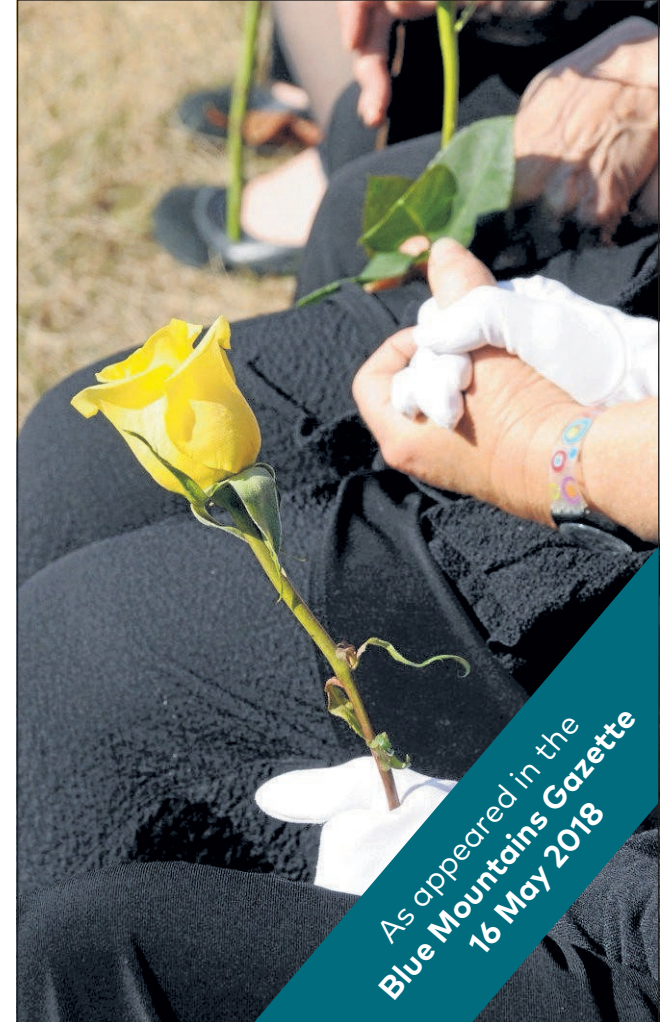
**Tom Brownjohn**

religious structures that you would expect at any memorial service, but it is entirely up to the family.”

Mr Brownjohn said the cost of arranging a memorial ceremony and celebration is roughly the same as a traditional funeral.

“If it is done well, the memorial ceremony and celebration will help to bring a sense of closure to the void that one feels at these sad times,” Mr Brownjohn said.

“The purpose of the celebration is transformational: We come to the ceremony in one state, we leave in another – one of celebration.”



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