



AUSTRALIAN
FUNERAL
DIRECTORS
ASSOCIATION

AFDA NATIONAL CONVENTION

VIETNAM

24-27 MARCH 2025 | NEW WORLD SAIGON HOTEL, HO CHI MINH CITY

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION CLOSES
17 JANUARY 2025





PRESIDENT'S INVITATION

On behalf of the AFDA National Executive, it gives me great pleasure to extend a warm invitation to members and industry colleagues to attend the 2025 AFDA National Convention to be held at the New World Saigon Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam starting on Monday 24 March with a Welcome Reception and ending on Thursday 27 March with the President's Gala Dinner.

This year's program has a slightly different structure and is spread over four days to allow us to make the most of this exciting location. In addition to the great education program that has been developed with a variety of education sessions from international speakers, we have put together a fantastic social event schedule that will provide plenty of opportunities to see the exciting Ho Chi Minh City and surrounds including a city sights tour with visits to the Presidential Palace, the Ben Thanh Market, Cyclo Ride and Tai Chi in the park. Members will also get to experience the stunning Chill Skybar, Saigon Princess dinner cruise, War Remnants Museum and for partners, a private cooking class at Hoa Tuc restaurant. If you're looking to do more exploring after the convention, additional optional tours have been planned to visit the Cu Chi Tunnels or the Mekong Delta.

I take this opportunity to thank all our convention sponsors and in particular our National Corporate Partners – Foresters Financial, Hyqual Australia, Funeral Plan Management/Australian Unity, ACC Higgins, FireHawk Funerals, Prime Grafix, Key Business Advisors, AFRM Claims Advocacy, Direct Mortuary Transfers and InvoCare Memorial Parks & Gardens. Without their continued support along with all our loyal sponsors this annual convention would not be possible.

Please join us for the 2025 AFDA National Convention and I urge you to register now to take advantage of the early bird registration rate, which applies for full registrations received by 17 January 2025.

Kelly Scott

AFDA National President

DESTINATION: HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

Vietnam is an exciting country to travel to with vibrant street life, exquisite food, timeless culture and epic landscapes, it has something to please every visitor. Being a relatively undiscovered destination, it's a nation on the move. Vietnam balances cool urban culture with traditional values and this contrast between old and new Vietnam is a big part of its appeal.

Ho Chi Minh City is a lively, bustling city with a unique blend of colonial influences and traditional culture and will entice you with its captivating narrow streets, street markets alongside luxury shopping malls and sleek new hotels. Nearby, the water world of the Mekong Delta as well as islands big and small, are just waiting to be explored.



New World Saigon Hotel is ideally situated in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, making it the perfect location for attendees to explore the city and its local hidden gems. The hotel features 533 modern guestrooms, including contemporary suites with dazzling city views. Guests can enjoy a range of fitness and leisure amenities including an outdoor pool and sauna, as well as exquisite dining experiences crafted by five-star culinary chefs, showcasing the treasures of Saigon. Additional features at this hotel include complimentary wireless internet access, concierge services, and gift shops/newsstands. Whether it be a productive conference, a culinary escapade, or a luxurious stay, New World Saigon is the place to be for any occasion.



DELEGATE'S PROGRAM

12 CPD HOURS

Monday 24 March

12.00pm – 5.00pm	Convention Registration Name Tags <i>Sponsored by Ashton Manufacturing</i>	Garden 2 Room
5.45pm	Meet in hotel lobby for short walk to dinner	Hotel Lobby
6.00pm – 9.00pm	AFDA President's Welcome Cocktail Reception <i>Sponsored by Hyqual Australia</i>	Chill Skybar

Tuesday 25 March

9.00am – 10.20am	Official Opening, Memorial Service and Industry Reports	Mekong Ballroom
10.20am – 10.30am	National Corporate Partner Update <i>Hyqual Australia</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.30am – 10.40am	National Corporate Partner Update <i>Funeral Plan Management/Australian Unity</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.40am – 11.10am	Morning Tea <i>Sponsored by Batesville Casket Company</i>	Mekong Foyer
11.10am – 12.10pm	Breaking the Silence: Integrating Death, Dying and Bereavement Education into Schools John Adams, Perry and Phillips Funerals, UK <i>Sponsored by Prime Grafix</i>	Mekong Ballroom
12.10pm – 12.20pm	National Corporate Partner Update <i>Prime Grafix</i>	Mekong Ballroom
12.20pm – 1.00pm	Lunch <i>Sponsored by My Tributes</i>	Hotel Restaurant
1.20pm	Meet in lobby for afternoon activities (split into groups)	Hotel Lobby
1.30pm – 5.00pm	Afternoon Activity: Saigon City Sights Tour <i>Sponsored by Funeral Plan Management/Australian Unity</i>	Various locations
6.00pm	Coaches depart for Dinner Cruise	Hotel Lobby
6.30pm – 10.30pm	AFDA Convention Dinner Cruise <i>Sponsored by InvoCare Memorial Parks & Gardens</i>	Saigon Princess, Nha Rong Port

Wednesday 26 March

9.00am – 9.50am	Leadership Through Change John Adams, Perry and Phillips Funerals, UK <i>Sponsored by ACC Higgins</i>	Mekong Ballroom
9.50am – 10.00am	National Corporate Partner Update <i>ACC Higgins</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.00am – 10.10am	National Corporate Partner Update <i>InvoCare Memorial Parks & Gardens</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.10am – 10.50am	The Many Practical Applications of AI for Funeral Homes Marc Foi, FireHawk Funerals <i>Sponsored by FireHawk Funerals</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.50am – 11.00am	National Corporate Partner Update <i>FireHawk Funerals</i>	Mekong Ballroom
11.00am – 11.30am	Morning Tea <i>Sponsored by Arrow Bronze</i>	Mekong Foyer
11.30am – 12.10pm	The Future of Learning Greg Shorland, Funeral Learning Hub <i>Sponsored by Shotton Parmed</i>	Mekong Ballroom
12.10pm – 12.20pm	National Corporate Partner Update <i>Foresters Financial</i>	Mekong Ballroom
12.20pm – 1.00pm	Break – Room turnaround for lunch	
1.00pm – 3.30pm	Keynote Luncheon with Cat Thao Nguyen <i>Sponsored by Foresters Financial</i>	Mekong Ballroom
	Free afternoon and evening	

Thursday 27 March

9.00am – 9.50am	Right Place Right Time – And Being Ready Simon Pugh, QLM Label Makers Group <i>Sponsored by AFRM Claims Advocacy</i>	Mekong Ballroom
9.50am – 10.00am	National Corporate Partner Update <i>AFRM Claims Advocacy</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.00am – 10.40am	Being an Employer of Choice in Managing Staff Colin Wilson, Key Business Advisors <i>Sponsored by Key Business Advisors</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.40am – 10.50am	National Corporate Partner Update <i>Key Business Advisors</i>	Mekong Ballroom
10.50am – 11.20am	Morning Tea <i>Sponsored by KeyInvest</i>	Mekong Foyer
11.20am – 12.00pm	Member's Panel Session	Mekong Ballroom
12.00pm – 12.10pm	National Corporate Partner Update <i>Direct Mortuary Transfers</i>	Mekong Ballroom
12.10pm – 1.00pm	Lunch <i>Sponsored by KeyInvest</i>	Hotel Restaurant
1.15pm	Coaches depart for afternoon activity	Hotel Lobby
1.30pm – 3.30pm	Afternoon Activity: War Remnants Museum <i>Sponsored by Direct Mortuary Transfers</i>	War Remnants Museum
6.45pm	Group Photo	Hotel Lobby/staircase
7.00pm – 11.00pm	AFDA President's Gala Dinner <i>Sponsored by Nine Media</i>	Ben Thanh Grand Ballroom

EDUCATION SESSIONS

Keynote Luncheon Speaker

Cat Thao Nguyen, Vietnam

Cat Thao Nguyen is the Managing Director of Global Ready LLC and Lumina Learning Partner, helping organisations and individuals lead inclusively in a globalised world. Born in a refugee camp in Thailand and arriving in Australia in 1980, Cat Thao's memoir, *We Are Here*, tells the powerful story of her family's escape from Vietnam across the Cambodian Killing Fields and their life as new migrants in Australia.



With a diverse career spanning corporate law, private equity, and international education, Cat Thao is a trailblazer. She has played a pivotal role in strengthening trade, cooperation, and cultural ties between Vietnam and Australia and co-founded the Australia Vietnam Young Leadership Dialogue, uniting leaders from both countries to advance sustainability and social justice. Cat Thao was the first Asian-Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations General Assembly and the first Vietnamese-certified advisor by the Cultural Intelligence Center (USA).

Breaking the Silence: Integrating Death, Dying and Bereavement Education into Schools

John Adams, Perry and Phillips Funerals, UK

John Adams is a fourth-generation funeral director, respected podcast host, and dedicated advocate for incorporating death, dying, and bereavement education into the UK national curriculum. His efforts have sparked national attention, leading to a parliamentary debate on the topic. John has held notable roles, including serving as an advisor to Child Bereavement UK and as an Ambassador for the Good Grief Trust. As a Past President of the UK's National Association of Funeral Directors, John is a prominent voice in the funeral industry, aiming to foster open conversations about death and grief. In his presentation, John will discuss the importance of death education, the progress of his campaign for legislative change, and the role of funeral professionals in supporting these vital conversations.



Leadership Through Change

John Adams, Perry and Phillips Funerals, UK

In his second presentation John Adams' will explore the evolution of the industry from traditional practices to personalised, diverse services. He will address growing societal expectations for tailored care, the rise in unattended funerals, and the challenges of recruiting and retaining skilled staff. The balance between offering compassionate service and maintaining a sustainable business is crucial, and leadership plays a vital role in adapting to future trends. Ultimately, John will highlight the need for empathetic leadership that focuses on a culture of service while ensuring business viability.

Right Place Right Time – And Being Ready

Simon Pugh, QLM Label Makers Group, Vietnam



Simon Pugh is the CEO and majority shareholder of QLM Label Makers, one of Asia-Pacific's largest label and packaging companies with over 500 team members. Taking over in 2002, Simon has led QLM's growth and expansion from a small family business, moving to Vietnam in 2012 to oversee the acquisition of the QLM Group's investment and coordinate its presence throughout Asia-Pacific. A passionate adventurer, Simon has travelled to over 90 countries, hitchhiked across Africa, and recently trekked to Everest Base Camp, climbing a 6,000-metre peak along the way.

Being an Employer of Choice in Managing Staff

Colin Wilson, Key Business Advisors, Australia



Colin Wilson, founder and director of Key Business Advisors (KBA), leads his business with determination, passion, and motivation. Over the past three years, KBA has provided valuable support to the growth and success of many AFDA Member funeral homes. Colin's presentation will cover being 'an employer of choice when managing staff' focusing on three key topics: Leadership, Communication and Culture in driving the right behaviours for your funeral home to excel. With Colin's industry experience and knowledge of the funeral industry, he will provide insight into how to empower staff in your funeral home.

The Many Practical Applications of AI for Funeral Homes

Marc Foi, FireHawk Funerals, Australia



Marc Foi brings a unique blend of passion for new technology and a dedication to transforming the funeral industry. As the Founder and CEO of FireHawk Funerals CRM, now supporting over 1,000 funeral locations worldwide, he is committed to helping funeral directors streamline their operations and harness the latest innovations to drive success. Marc will guide us through the latest developments in AI, exploring its risks, rewards, and practical tips.

The Future of Learning

Greg Shorland, Funeral Learning Hub, Canada



Greg Shorland has over 20 years' experience working in training and assessment frameworks and is passionate about leveraging technology to engage learners effectively. Greg has been working with AFDA since 2022 and has been pivotal in developing the Funeral Learning Hub launched in November 2023, which now offers over 60 courses in 22 topic bundles for AFDA Members. Greg's presentation will provide an overview of the Funeral Learning Hub and explore how technology, including AI, can personalise the learning and assessment journey.

SOCIAL PROGRAM

AFDA President's Welcome Cocktail Reception

Sponsored by Hyqual Australia

Date: Monday 24 March 2025
Time: 6.00pm – 9.00pm
Venue: Chill Skybar

What better way to kick off convention than with a cocktail reception at one of Ho Chi Minh City's 'Best Bars' Chill Skybar. Chill, a two-story restaurant and bar located on the 26th floor in the heart of the city boasts spectacular and uninterrupted views of the Ho Chi Minh City skyline. Enjoy canapes and free flowing drinks while catching up with colleagues and peers from the industry.

Afternoon Activity – Saigon City Sights Tour

Sponsored by Funeral Plan Management/Australian Unity

Date: Tuesday 25 March 2025
Time: 1.30pm – 5:00pm

Journey through Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon, a vibrant metropolis marked by its journey from the Indochina era to its rapid modernisation. The tour includes visits to the majestic Notre Dame Cathedral, the Grand Central Post Office, the Presidential Palace, Ben Thanh Market and Tao Dan Park for a group Tai Chi activity. Members will also get to experience a cyclo ride and time to explore and shop in the markets.

AFDA Convention Dinner – Saigon Princess River Cruise

Sponsored by InvoCare Memorial Parks & Gardens

Date: Tuesday 25 March 2025
Time: 6.30pm – 10.30pm
Venue: Saigon Princess Boat,
Nha Rong Port

Delegates will enjoy the unique culinary experience from local premium ingredients all while enjoying breathtaking panoramic views of the Saigon River and Ho Chi Minh City at night aboard the Saigon Princess River Cruise. Along with live entertainment, this casual seated dinner will be the perfect environment to relax and have fun with colleagues.

Afternoon Activity – War Remnants Museum

Sponsored by Direct Mortuary Transfers

Date: Thursday 27 March 2025
Time: 1.30pm – 3.30pm

Warning: Graphic war related content may be confronting

Experience the gripping history at the War Remnants Museum, formerly known as the Chinese and American War Crimes Museum. The museum provides a different perspective on the French and American wars revealing their impact on both soldiers and civilians and showcases US armored vehicles, artillery and weapons and informative displays, photographs, artifacts on the evidence of the crimes and the consequences of the war that the invasion force has caused to Vietnam.

AFDA President's Gala Dinner

Sponsored by Nine Media

Date: Thursday 27 March 2025
Time: 7.00pm – 11.00pm
Venue: Ben Thanh Ballroom,
New World Saigon Hotel

Theme: White Night Soiree

Convention delegates can look forward to a glamorous final night themed the 'White Night Soiree.' To help you pack, we're moving away from 'black tie' – think white linens, short sleeve shirts, tailored shorts, and summer dresses. Held in the stunning Ballroom at New World Saigon Hotel, the evening will feature the Presidential Changeover Ceremony. As the convention wraps up, delegates will enjoy delicious food, dancing, and socialising before parting ways for another year.

PARTNER'S PROGRAM

Cooking Class – Hoa Tuc Restaurant

Date: Thursday 27 March 2025
Time: 9.00am – 12.00pm (*coach departs from Hotel Lobby*)
Venue: Hoa Tuc Restaurant

An exciting activity and experience await partners as they attend the renowned Hoa Tuc Cooking Class, bringing Vietnamese cuisine to the curious and passionate alike. This class is specially designed for those who would like to experience the Vietnamese culture and the authentic and contemporary taste of Vietnamese food. Guests will enjoy a hands-on cooking class and the delicious Vietnamese meal after cooking.

Afternoon Activity – War Remnants Museum

Date: Thursday 27 March 2025
Time: 1.30pm – 3.30pm

Refer to social program for details.

DRESS CODE

Welcome Cocktail Reception

Cocktail

Opening Ceremony, Education Sessions and Keynote Luncheon

Smart Casual

Afternoon Activities and Partners Program

Casual

Dinner Cruise

Smart Casual

President's Gala Dinner

White Night Soiree Theme

OPTIONAL TOURS

Cu Chi Tunnels

Date: Friday 28 March 2025
Time: 8.30am – 1.30pm
Cost: AUD \$55 per person

Embark on a journey to the Cu Chi area, once the operational base for Vietcong guerillas who played a pivotal role during the war. Witness the hand-dug tunnels, initially excavated during the 1940s French occupation and later expanded in the 1960s. These tunnels were lifelines during the war, serving as hideouts, supply routes, and communication channels. This 120km network endures as a profound war memorial.

Mekong Delta

Date: Friday 28 March 2025
Time: 8.30am – 3.30pm
Cost: AUD \$85 per person

Venture out of the city, through a panorama of verdant rice paddies and tranquil villages in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam's agricultural heartland, fondly known as the 'rice bowl'. As roads are sparse, boats are the main means of transport, offering a glimpse into the river's vastness. Enjoy a peaceful sampan ride amidst lush palms before returning to the mainland for a seafood lunch.

REGISTRATION

To register online please visit:

<http://tix.yt/2025-afda-national-convention-vietnam>



Payment is required at the time of registration via Sticky Tickets and a tax invoice/receipt will be issued immediately. Once your registration is received by AFDA, an official confirmation outlining your participation will be sent.

For any registration questions, please contact the AFDA National Office via deanne.brown@afda.org.au

Early Bird Registrations close on 17 January 2025.

Full Registration includes:

Attendance at all convention education sessions or partner program, dinner functions, group activities, return transport to off-site events as stated in program, convention satchel/gift and pocket program.

Partial Registration includes:

Attendance at the specific session or activity, catering and transport as detailed in the specific session/activity if applicable. Please note: Partial Registration does not include the convention gift.

Registration Cancellations and Refunds

Registration cancellations must be received in writing at AFDA National Office to deanne.brown@afda.org.au prior to 21 February 2025. Thereafter, no refunds will apply unless the convention program is cancelled due to circumstances beyond AFDA's control, however registrations may be transferred to another person within the same company.

ACCOMMODATION BOOKINGS

To make an accommodation booking please book online at:

www.australiawideconferences.com.au/afda2025

Please do not book accommodation directly with the hotel – AFDA are holding a room block and accommodation bookings are being managed by Australia Wide Conferences:

Jon Doland

Australia Wide Conferences

Mobile: 0407 904 600

Email: jon@australiawideconferences.com.au

All accommodation bookings must be made prior to Friday 20 December 2024.

After this date it is at the hotels discretion whether to accept reservations which will be at best available hotel rate and subject to availability. Bookings are not secured until Jon Doland receives your booking request and has emailed you a confirmation of your reservation. Please note that payment is due once the booking is confirmed and will be processed by the hotel against the credit card supplied within 48 hours.

ACCOMMODATION CANCELLATION POLICY:

No penalty applies to cancellations received more than 30 days prior to arrival. Any cancellations received 29-15 days prior to arrival will incur a charge of 1 night's accommodation. Any cancellations 14-7 days prior to arrival will be charged 50% of the entire stay. Any cancellations less than 7 days prior to arrival or no show will be charged in full for the respective nights cancelled. Any cancellations / amendments must be emailed to jon@australiawideconferences.com.au

New World Saigon Hotel

The New World Saigon Hotel offers a variety of spacious and elegant options ranging from Run of House (Deluxe or Premier rooms) to Residence Club Premier Room.

Run of House Room* **Approx AUD \$270 p/n**
Residence Club Premier Room **Approx AUD \$335 p/n**

- Room rates include full buffet breakfast for up to 2 guests per room.
- Check in time is 2.00pm, check out time is 12.00pm.
- Other room types available, please refer to www.australiawideconferences.com.au/afda2025 or contact Jon Doland directly.
- *Run of House room types will be allocated by the hotel and can't be requested by the guest.

IMPORTANT DETAILS:

As per Vietnam legal requirements for international events, AFDA is required to apply for a conference licence. This is being coordinated by Destination Asia (Vietnam). All delegates and partners/family attending the convention must provide a colour scanned copy of their passport to AFDA when registering. AFDA will supply this to Mr Phan Hong Son, MICE Account Manager at Destination Asia. All passport PDF's must be received by 17 January 2025 to deanne.brown@afda.org.au.

SPONSORS

AFDA gratefully acknowledges the support of the following Sponsors:

