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## WILLS KIT - WHEN AN ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAITS ISLANDER ARTIST PASSES AWAY LEAVING A WILL IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### What is a “Will”?

A Will is a legal document that an artist or other person makes during their lifetime that sets out how they want their money and other belongings to be distributed among their family and friends when they pass away.

If a person passes away without leaving a valid Will, that person is said to have died “**intestate**”. If they have a Will but it only deals with some of that person’s belongings, that person is said to have passed away “**partially intestate**”. If a person passes away intestate, the laws of intestacy will determine who is entitled to have that person’s estate including any copyright and resale royalty. If the person passes away partially intestate, then the law determines how to distribute those things that are not covered by the Will.

The intestacy rules may require the deceased person’s assets to be distributed in a way which is very different to the outcome that the family of the deceased person expect, and may also be very different to the result that the deceased person would have wanted. In particular, these rules may be very different from the traditional or customary way of dealing with the passing of an Indigenous person. **For that reason, it is usually sensible to prepare a Will to make sure that the estate goes to the family and community members that the artist believes should receive it.**

In this information sheet, we focus on the process which is followed when an artist passes away after having made a Will.

### What is the “Estate”?

The assets owned by a person at the time of their death are described as that person’s “**estate**”.

The estate can include real estate (property), cars, insurance policies, money in bank accounts, shares, artwork, furniture, jewellery and clothes and even debts owed to the person such as money due from the sale of artwork. Sometimes the estate will also include mining royalties or superannuation. The estate may also owe money, such as for credit card bills or car payments.

Importantly, every artist’s estate is likely to include copyright in the artwork created during his or her lifetime. Copyright can be an important source of income for an artist’s family as it lasts for 70 years after the artist passes away. The estate can earn royalties for the right to reproduce the artist’s paintings in auction catalogues, art books and merchandise long after the paintings themselves are sold and the artist has died.

In addition, with the passing of the *Resale Royalty Right for Visual Artists Act 2009 (Cth)*, the artist’s estate will include the entitlement to resale royalties on all eligible commercial resales of the artist’s works which take place in the 70 years after the artist’s passing

For most Aboriginal and Torres Strait visual artists, the most important assets in the estate are likely to be the following:

1. Money in any personal bank account held in the artist's name;
2. Money held by the art centre from the sale of paintings;
3. Paintings held by the art centre or a commercial gallery or dealer on consignment;
4. Resale royalties; and
5. Copyright including entitlements to licensing royalties from collecting societies or under licensing deals negotiated during the artist's lifetime.

As well as assets, the estate is also responsible for certain debts and other liabilities. The liabilities of the estate will include paying any costs associated with the funeral, and any other debts of the deceased artist such as any income tax that might be owed.

In this information sheet we only deal with the assets and liabilities listed above. If the estate contains assets or liabilities other than the ones mentioned above, we recommend you get legal advice as to the appropriate procedure to deal with them.

## Who are the 'Beneficiaries'?

The people who are named in the Will as the ones who should receive the artist's estate after he or she passes away are called the '**beneficiaries**'. A person who passes away before the artist cannot be a beneficiary. In addition, if a beneficiary passes away during the 30 days after the date on which the artist died, they may not be entitled to inherit anything under the Will. The Will must be read as if that beneficiary had passed away before the artist<sup>i</sup>.

## Who is the "Executor"?

Most Wills nominate one person to be the 'trustee' or 'executor' of the Will. It is usually a trusted family member or friend but can be a lawyer or the Public Trustee<sup>ii</sup>.

Sometimes the Will appoints two people jointly as the executors and trustees. In some Wills, there is a first choice of executor and then a second choice – in case the first person is sick or dies before the artist or simply doesn't want to be the executor and trustee.

Some Wills don't appoint any executor or the executor may already have passed away. (Sometimes a Will is made many years before the artist actually passes away.) In that case, a family member or other person can apply to be appointed as the executor or the Public Trustee can be asked to administer the estate in accordance with the terms of the Will.

The executor has responsibility for the "**administration**" of the Will and the deceased's estate. The administration of the deceased's estate will involve collecting the deceased's assets, establishing what debts and tax the estate owes, paying them, and then distributing the assets to the beneficiaries named in the Will.

It is important to remember that the executor's duties may continue for a long time. The executor may have to look after assets given to children who are under 18 years of age. Many artists appoint the executor to manage their copyright and resale royalty entitlements on an ongoing basis.

## Should the executor have a ‘reading’ of the Will?

One of the executor’s first jobs is to find and look after the original Will. If it was not among the papers of the deceased, it may have been held by a solicitor or by the artist’s art centre. It must be handed to the executor. The Will may also have been stored with the Public Trustee of the Northern Territory.

The executor must read the Will carefully and understand how the artist wanted his or her estate to be distributed. It is important to identify which family members are entitled to the deceased artist’s assets according to the Will (ie the beneficiaries).

It is not a legal requirement to have a ‘reading’ of the Will for the family but it is a good idea to arrange a meeting of the family of the deceased and the beneficiaries named in the Will and explain to them what the Will says. Arts Law or the art centre manager may be able to help with this. If any of the beneficiaries can’t attend the meeting, the executor can send them a photocopy of the Will.

The executor will need several copies of the Will – it is very important not to write on, remove the staples from, or give away the original Will. If anyone needs to see the Will, show or give them a photocopy and not the original. Never staple the original Will to any other document.

The executor must provide a copy of the Will to the following people if they request a copy:

1. Any person mentioned in the Will (or any earlier Will) such as a beneficiary;
2. Any spouse, parent, child or grandchild of the willmaker;
3. Any parent or guardian of a person mentioned in a Will who is a minor; and
4. Any person to whom the willmaker owed money (a creditor).

## Funeral Arrangements

Usually funeral arrangements are managed by the family and in accordance with any express wishes of the deceased person. Often the Will says where the artist wanted to be buried. This should be respected if possible. If there is any disagreement within the family, the executor makes the final decision.

The executor should consider that a very expensive funeral will mean that there is less money in the estate for the beneficiaries. The funeral should not cost more than the estate can afford.

The executor must pay funeral expenses and the costs of administration (such as Court filing fees, postage etc) before other any debtors are paid and before distributing any money to the family or other beneficiaries named in the Will.

In the Northern Territory, the Central Land Council (CLC) may provide help to pay funeral costs. As at 1 January 2013, there is a limit of \$1200 toward the costs of the casket and funeral service. The application form can be downloaded from the [CLC website](#). The CLC can be contacted by telephone: 08 8952 6211.

## Carrying out the instructions in the Will

There are three options for administering the estate:

- Option 1:** The Public Trustee can manage the estate. The Will may nominate the Public Trustee as executor. However the beneficiaries can also ask the Public Trustee to manage the estate even if the Will appointed someone else. This is usually appropriate if the Will does not name an executor or the executor who is named in the Will has also passed away or cannot take on the job of executor AND no one in the family of the deceased is prepared to take on that responsibility.
- Option 2:** The executor named in the Will can apply to the Supreme Court for an order confirming his or her authority to manage the estate. This is called a '**Grant of Probate**'. Where there is no executor, a family member or other person can apply to the Supreme Court for permission to manage the estate. This is called a '**Grant of Administration**' and is appropriate if the Will does not name an executor or the executor who is named in the Will has also passed away or cannot take on the job of executor. The family may prefer that a family member or trusted friend carry out those responsibilities rather than the Public Trustee. A Grant of Probate or Administration is necessary where businesses or institutions which hold the deceased's assets are not be prepared to release them to the executor unless he or she has such a Court order confirming his or her authority.
- Option 3:** The executor named in the Will can try to manage the estate and distribute all the assets in accordance with the instructions in the Will without a Grant of Probate or Administration. This may be possible for smaller estates where there is no real property (land) involved.

### Option 1 – Asking the State Trustees Office to manage the estate

If the Will nominates the Public Trustee as the executor, the Public Trustee must be notified that the artist has passed away. Where there is no executor named in the Will, or that person does not want to, or cannot take on the job of trustee, the beneficiaries can approach the Public Trustee and ask it to administer the estate.

The Public Trustee is a statutory corporation set up by the Northern Territory government. The Public Trustee is not obliged to administer the estate (even if it was named as the executor by the Will). It will not often refuse to do this, but may do so if, for example, the estate is insolvent (or has so few assets that there is not enough to cover the Public Trustee's costs).

The Public Trustee can also apply to take over the administration of an estate if it considers it necessary –for example where the executor has not commenced administration within three months of date on which the artist passed away. In such a case, the Court will usually grant rights of administration to the Public Trustee unless the person entitled to probate or letters of administration appears and can justify their delay.

[Document A](#) is a template letter to the Public Trustee requesting that it administer the estate of the deceased artist in accordance with the terms of the Will.

The Public Trustee is entitled to charge fees for administering the estate that must be paid by the estate before it can be distributed to the beneficiaries. The Public Trustee's total charges will vary, depending on the size and complexity of the estate, and the number of beneficiaries. In addition to its standard charges, the Public Trustee may also incur certain additional costs that must be paid out of the estate (known as disbursements), such as court filing costs, or the cost of obtaining a Death Certificate.

The fees charged by the Public trustee are set out on the [Public Trustee's website](#). The fees are calculated based on the value of the estate – as at February 2023, the minimum charge is \$653.40 plus court fees and disbursements.

An example of the sort of charges the Public Trustee might incur in administering an estate is set out below.

**Example:**

An Indigenous artist has passed away. Her Will leaves everything to be divided equally among her three children. Her estate contains the following property:

- A bank account with \$50,000;
- \$25,000 of unsold artworks; and
- \$25,000 held by an art centre.

Altogether, this estate is worth \$100,000.

If there were no difficulties or complexities encountered, the Public Trustee's standard charges for administering such an estate would probably be about \$4,520, plus disbursements. If the whereabouts of one or more of the beneficiaries was not known, the Public Trustee could charge additional fees of over \$5000. As at February 2023, the Supreme Court [filing fee](#) is \$1,350 (originating process filing fee \$1,310 + search fee \$31) and there would be other disbursements as well.

Small estates: If the value of the estate is less than \$20,000, the Public Trustee can publish an advertisement in a territory newspaper of its intention to administer the estate and can then proceed to do so without applying to the Court for a Grant of Probate<sup>iii</sup>. This will reduce the costs of administration.

The Public Trustee has confirmed that in most cases, administration of an estate can be completed within 6 months. However, more complicated cases can sometimes take years to be completed.

Once the Public Trustee is appointed, it takes legal responsibility for ensuring the estate is administered properly. The Public Trustee will pay any debts and will be responsible for arranging the sale of any artworks and collecting the proceeds of sale. It will contact each of the beneficiaries and arrange to pay them their share of the estate.

Where the artist had an agreement with the art centre under which the art centre was entitled to sell and retain commission on works painted at the art centre, the Public Trustee may be obligated to continue those arrangements put into place during the artist's lifetime. Even where there is no such arrangement, the Public Trustee is generally keen to administer estates in the most beneficial way possible, and may be willing to allow the art centre to arrange for exhibitions and sales of unsold artworks to ensure that they get the best possible price.

For more information about the Public Trustee's role generally, see the [Public Trustee's website](#).

The Public Trustee's contact details are as follows:

Email: [AGD.PublicTrustee@nt.gov.au](mailto:AGD.PublicTrustee@nt.gov.au)

Darwin: Nichols Place – Cnr Cavenagh & Bennett Streets Darwin NT 0800  
Postal address: GPO Box 470 Darwin NT 0801  
Phone: (08) 8999 7271

Alice Springs: Centerpoint Building – Cnr Gregory Terrace & Hartley Streets, Alice Springs NT 0870  
Phone: (08) 8951 5338

## **Option 2: The executor or a family member can apply to the Supreme Court to be appointed as the formal administrator of the estate**

Where an estate contains substantial assets, the executor named in the Will may need to apply to the Supreme Court for a 'Grant of Probate' or formal confirmation of his or her authority to manage the estate. The Grant of Probate is a document that can be shown to the persons with whom the executor is dealing as evidence that they are dealing with the correct person.

Applying for a Grant of Probate can involve costs, and can be a complex and time-consuming process.

Before it will issue a Grant of Probate, the Court must be satisfied that the Will appointing the executor is valid and is the last Will.

An application for a grant of administration must be apply within 6 months of the date of death of the deceased. After that time, the executor can still seek a Grant of Probate but will need to prepare an affidavit explaining the reasons for the delay.

- The first step in applying for the grant of probate is to electronically file a Notice of intended application for publication on the Court's website.<sup>1</sup>

A copy of the Notice must be sent to the Public Trustee in PDF format to [ProbateOfficer.NT@nt.gov.au](mailto:ProbateOfficer.NT@nt.gov.au).

Before you lodge the application, you must call the Public Trustee's Office on (08) 8999 7271 to check that they do not have a will made out by the deceased, even if you know that they do not have one. This is because you will need to swear on oath to say that you have done so.

You will need to wait for two weeks to elapse from the date of filing the Notice of intended application for publication, before filing the below documents.

The following [documents](#) must be filed with the Supreme Court:

1. An Application for a Grant of Probate;
2. The original will
3. Affidavit of Legal Practitioner
4. Affidavit of death
5. Affidavit of executor
6. Affidavit of identity
7. Affidavit of assets and liabilities
8. Affidavit of publication and search
9. Oath of office
10. Grant of probate

In most cases, the help of a solicitor in the Northern Territory will be necessary to prepare these documents (which may accrue solicitor's costs). The process of preparing all the necessary documents for filing with the Supreme Court, applying to the Supreme Court and satisfying any requisitions from the Supreme Court may take some time.

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<sup>1</sup> Practice Direction 3 of 2020 dispenses with the requirement for publication in a newspaper (from r 88.09(1) of the Supreme Court Rules), where the notice is filed electronically with the Registry of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory.

Applying for a Grant of Probate will require payment of a court filing fee of \$1,350 (the cost at February 2023 for estates worth more than \$20,000) that must be paid when the documents are lodged. The Registrar of the Supreme Court has the power to waive a court fee if financial hardship can be demonstrated<sup>iv</sup>. The [Fee Waiver Form](#) can be downloaded from the Supreme Court Website. It is also possible to apply for a refund in limited circumstances.

In addition to the filing fee, the application for a Grant of Probate is likely to involve other upfront costs, such as the purchase of a Death Certificate. These costs can be reimbursed from the money in the estate.

Once the papers are filed, the Grant should be issued within about 4 weeks. If there are any problems, a staff member from the Supreme Court will contact you.

### **Small Estates**

Where the total value of the estate is no more than \$20,000, a much simpler process is available<sup>v</sup>. Instead of a more formal application to the Supreme Court, an application can be made directly to the Registrar of the Court who will assist the executor to prepare the necessary documents and advertisements. The Registrar rather than a judge will consider and decide the application.

For assistance contact the Probate Clerk at the NT Supreme Court, State Square, Darwin NT 0800; telephone (08) 8999 6562 or email [ProbateOfficer.NT@nt.gov.au](mailto:ProbateOfficer.NT@nt.gov.au). Or the Alice Springs Registry (08) 8951 5727.

### **Letters of Administration**

If the person applying to the Court is not the executor named in the Will, a similar process is involved called applying for Letters of Administration. Before it will grant Letters of Administration to someone, the Court must be satisfied that the applicant is an appropriate person to be appointed as the administrator. The Court generally will not grant the right to administer a deceased's estate to a person unrelated to the deceased (such as an art centre) when there are beneficiaries who can be identified and are living in the Northern Territory. However, if there is no family member willing to apply, or all the beneficiaries are under age, the Court may appoint someone else.

Once the Grant of Probate or Administration is issued, it can be used by the executor to show that he or she has the legal right to deal with the assets of the estate, including the right to provide instructions in relation to the sale of artwork and to collect money owed to the estate. Some businesses will not release the property of a deceased person unless they are provided with a Grant of Probate or Administration.

The executor can usually obtain reimbursement from the assets of the estate for any costs, expenses or fees associated with the administration of the estate (such as the costs of the application to the Supreme Court). After payment of funeral expenses and the artist's debts, the executor can distribute the remaining assets to the beneficiaries in accordance with the terms of the Will.

The art centre or bank holding money or property belonging to the estate must comply with the executor's instructions. Upon payment of money or the transfer of any property to the executor, he or she becomes legally responsible for such funds or property and for ensuring the estate is administered properly. The art centre or bank is relieved of legal responsibility to look after those funds or that property.

The executor can also receive resale royalties or licensing fees for distribution to the beneficiaries. Alternatively, the executor will notify the collecting society of the persons to whom those royalties should be paid in the future.

The executor may need to file a tax return for the estate. The position of executor involves substantial responsibility and he or she will be held responsible for any improper distribution.

### **Option 3 – Administration of the estate in accordance with the terms of the Will without applying to the Supreme Court**

Given the complexity, cost and time involved in Options 1 and 2, the beneficiaries of the estate may prefer not to proceed through the formal process of applying for a Court order or involving the Public Trustee. An alternative is for the executor to administer the estate informally, without applying to the Supreme Court.

## **Administration of the estate in accordance with the terms of the Will without applying to the Supreme Court**

This option will only be possible if those holding property or money on behalf of the estate (such as a bank or art centre) do not insist on sighting either a Grant of Administration or a Grant of Probate before they will release the property or money belonging to the estate. In other words, the bank or art centre must be prepared to transfer the property or release the money to an executor who has not had his or her appointment confirmed by the Court.

### **Who should take charge?**

In most cases, the executor named in the Will take responsibility for managing the estate. If that person is not willing or not able to take on that role, a family member may be able to do so. If the named executor cannot act, then it is preferable if all of the beneficiaries can reach agreement about how to proceed. The beneficiaries can authorise one or two people to manage the estate.

[Document B](#) is a suggested authority that can be used if the executor named in the Will cannot take on that role. The beneficiaries can sign this document to nominate who will act on behalf of all of them. This document can be used to demonstrate that all the beneficiaries agree. Whenever it is necessary to provide a copy of the Will, a copy of this authority should also accompany it.

The rest of this information sheet assumes that the person managing the estate is the executor named in the Will. However, if it is a different person, that person can still follow the steps set out below.

### **Does the estate need its own bank account?**

It is usually sensible to set up a bank account for the estate that is operated by the executor. This is not a personal account for the executor and must not be used for anything other than the business of managing the estate. The name of the account will be the words "Estate of..." followed by the name of the deceased artist. This account can be used for depositing any funds owed to the estate such as resale royalties or sales proceeds from artwork. It can be used to pay any debts such as taxes or credit card amounts. Once the executor is sure that all expenses have been paid, it can use this account to pay the rest to the beneficiaries in the shares set out in the Will. Once all the distributions have been made, the account can be closed.

In some cases, it may be possible to discuss with the art centre whether its account can be used for the purposes of the estate. This will save the executor setting up a separate account. The art centre may not be comfortable with this approach. If it does agree, the manager will want to see the Will and will usually require the executor to provide written instructions before making any payments.



In the rest of this information sheet, we assume that the estate has its own bank account; however the information set out below would also apply if the estate's funds were held in the art centre account.

## How does the executor get hold of the assets in the estate?

Set out below are some suggestions as to how the executor can approach the different organizations who hold the various assets which are part of the deceased artist's estate.

### Personal bank account held in the artist's name.

A bank may release funds in a deceased person's bank account to the beneficiaries if those funds are not substantial.

[Document C](#) is a suggested template letter to send to the bank. It should attach a certified copy of the Will as well as a copy of the death certificate and the most recent statement or the passbook and chequebook, if any.

The bank may require the executor to go in to a branch and prove his or her identity by producing, for example, a driver's licence or passport. Once the bank account can be accessed, it should be used to pay any outstanding funeral expenses. Otherwise the money should be kept until it is clear how the estate will be distributed among the beneficiaries. Before allowing access to the account, the bank may request that the executor sign an "indemnity" document, which can mean that the executor will be personally liable for any losses the bank suffers as a result of its decision to release the funds. If the bank requests that you sign such a document, you should seek legal advice. The Arts Law Centre can provide you with help in this respect.

### Money and paintings held by an Indigenous art centre where the artist was a member.

Most Indigenous art centres operate on the basis of an agreement with their artist members that entitles the art centre to a share of the sales proceeds of any artworks made through the art centre (such as art made using canvases and paints supplied by the art centre). In that case, after the artist passes away, the art centre is generally entitled to arrange the sale of all paintings and artwork created by the artist with the assistance of the art centre. The executor cannot give the paintings to another gallery or auction house to sell without the consent of the art centre and cannot keep any of that artwork to give directly to the beneficiaries unless the art centre agrees. In such cases, the simplest approach is for the art centre to sell the paintings in its possession and (after deduction of its share of the proceeds) deposit the funds into the estate's bank account, as well as any other moneys held for the artist in its account.

If the estate doesn't have its own bank account, the art centre may be willing to hold the money on trust for the estate in the art centre's own account until the executor is sure that all debts have been paid. The executor can instruct the art centre to make payments directly to the beneficiaries when appropriate.

[Document D](#) is a suggested template letter to send to the art centre asking that payments be made into the estate's bank account.

[Document E](#) is an alternative template letter to the art centre authorising it to hold any funds in its account until the executor directs that payments can be made to the beneficiaries.

If the executor is unsure as to nature of the deceased artist's arrangements with the art centre, it is important to get legal advice. The Arts Law Centre can help with this.

### **Money and paintings held by a commercial gallery or dealer.**

Any arrangement between the artist and a commercial gallery or dealer is likely to be terminated upon the artist's death. The executor is entitled to ask for the paintings to be returned and any amounts due to be paid into the estate's bank account. The executor might do this if it is decided to collect all the artist's works together and arrange for one major retrospective after a suitable period of time has passed.

[Document F](#) is a suggested template letter to send to a gallery or dealer asking it to return any unsold works and make any payments due.

Alternatively, if the executor decides that the best way to manage the assets is to proceed with that particular exhibition or consignment arrangements, the executor can request the gallery or dealer to sell the paintings and to pay the proceeds into the estate's bank account or directly to the beneficiaries.

[Document G](#) is an alternative template letter to send to a gallery or dealer asking it to proceed with the exhibition and sale arrangements which were planned during the artist's lifetime.

### **Resale royalties**

For information about the resale royalty right, see Arts Law's information sheet: [Resale royalty rights for visual artists](#). The organization nominated by the Federal government to manage the resale royalty scheme is Copyright Agency and further information can also be found on the [Copyright Agency website](#).

Copyright Agency also manages the statutory copyright royalties payable to copyright owners where artworks are reproduced in certain types of government and educational publications such as educational materials (both hard copy and online). See the [Copyright Agency website](#). For convenience, because Copyright Agency manages both types of royalties, we will deal with both in this section.

Contact Copyright Agency to find out if the deceased artist was registered for resale royalties (and/or statutory copyright royalties) on its toll-free number: 1800 066 844. Email: [resale@copyright.org.au](mailto:resale@copyright.org.au)

In most cases, Copyright Agency will amend its registration details and accept new instructions for the payment of future resale royalty (and statutory copyright royalty) payments without requiring the executor to provide letters of probate or administration from the Court.

[Document H](#) is a letter from the artist's art centre to Copyright Agency requesting registration of the estate for resale and statutory royalties. There are three options – registration of the beneficiaries, registration of a copyright trustee, or registration of the executor.

[Document I](#) is a suggested template letter and statutory declaration which can be signed by the executor and used instead of the art centre letter if the artist was not a member of an art centre.

Each applicant for registration (whether a beneficiary, copyright trustee or executor) will also need to complete the '[Registration Form for Artist's beneficiaries](#)' available on the Copyright Agency website

and submit it with the letter or statutory declaration. If more than one beneficiary is entitled to be registered, then one form needs to be completed for each beneficiary. The forms should be sent in together with a copy of the Will and evidence of the identity of the person or persons seeking registration.

The same steps can be used to register the resale royalty and statutory copyright royalty rights of a deceased artist who was not a Copyright Agency member during his or her lifetime.

### **Copyright, including entitlements to licensing royalties from collecting societies or under licensing deals negotiated during the artist's lifetime.**

Some Wills specifically gift the copyright to one or two people. In that case, the executor should give each of those beneficiaries a certified copy of the Will and the death certificate, which they can use to demonstrate that they now own the copyright. The *Copyright Act* automatically vests the ownership of the copyright in the beneficiaries named in the Will. They can use the Will to prove their ownership and register themselves with any collecting society.

#### **Example:**

A well-known Indigenous artist from the Cape York Peninsular has passed away. His works have been featured in books and films and he earned substantial copyright royalties during his lifetime. His Will leaves everything to his wife and four children. His eldest daughter is the executor. She registers the estate with Aboriginal Artists Agency (AAA) and instructs them that all royalties must be divided equally among the five beneficiaries. The National Gallery of Australia wish to conduct a major retrospective of the artist's work which will involve showing films of him painting and publishing a hardcover collectors' catalogue. AAA negotiates all the licensing agreements with the National Gallery including airfares for the family to attend the opening of the exhibition. AAA collects the royalties on behalf of the family and distributes them to the five beneficiaries. The following year, the films are broadcast on SBS and further royalties are paid to Screenrights which then distributes them to the five beneficiaries.

AAA and Screenrights deduct a commission from the royalties they collect. The beneficiaries do not have to negotiate or agree licensing arrangements among themselves. They do not need to spend money on a lawyer to help them with the copyright licensing contracts. This is included in the commission charged by the collecting society.

Most Wills don't specifically mention copyright in which case the copyright is simply divided up like the rest of the estate. If there are a number of beneficiaries who all share in the copyright, it can be very difficult to manage the copyright in a way that earns any money for the beneficiaries. The executor may have to consider how the copyright should be divided between the beneficiaries in order both to comply with the Will and help the beneficiaries to benefit in a practical way.

Some Wills nominate the executor or another named person as the 'trustee' of copyright with an ongoing responsibility to manage the copyright on behalf of a group of beneficiaries. This responsibility can continue well after all the other assets in the estate have been shared out among the beneficiaries and the executor's job is complete. The copyright trustee will need to open an account into which any copyright royalties can be deposited and he or she will then be responsible for distributing such payments to the beneficiaries.

Managing the copyright involves negotiating licence agreements and claiming royalties when the deceased artist's work is reproduced. Unless the copyright trustee or the beneficiaries have the time and expertise to manage this, Arts Law recommends that the deceased artist's copyright be registered with the appropriate collecting societies so that the beneficiaries can receive an income stream from copyright licensing opportunities. For information about collecting societies generally, see Arts Law's information sheet: [Copyright Collecting Societies](#).

This information sheet gives some guidance below about how to deal with the different collecting societies that might be relevant to the copyright of a visual artist.

If the artist was a member of an art centre, the executor's first step should be to contact the art centre to ask whether it had registered the artist with any collecting societies. If so, it may be that copyright royalties were paid into the art centre's account.

In all other situations, the executor should contact each collecting society directly and:

- Find out if the artist was registered;
- If so, advise that the artist has passed away and that the artist had a Will;
- Find out which bank account the artist was using to receive royalties and make sure that any money in this bank account is included in the estate.

The executor will usually need to update the registration details in one of the following ways:

- Register the executor as the person responsible for administering the estate and direct that any royalties are paid into the estate's bank account until the executor has paid all the estate's liabilities and is ready to make distributions to the beneficiaries;
- Register the beneficiaries as the new owners of copyright and direct that future royalties be paid directly into their accounts; or
- Register the copyright trustee as the new owner of copyright and direct that future royalties be paid directly into the trustee's account so that he or she can then share those royalties among the beneficiaries.

If the executor or copyright trustee does not have a separate bank account, it may be appropriate to ask to use the account of the art centre where the artist was a member.

[Document J](#) is a letter from the art centre to the collecting societies (other than Copyright Agency) advising them that the artist has passed away and asking them to continue paying royalties into the art centre account.

*i. Copyright Agency Limited:*

If the artist was already registered with Copyright Agency for copyright licensing, contact Copyright Agency about registering the artist's estate for payment of the statutory royalties payable to copyright owners where artworks are reproduced in certain types of government and educational publications such as educational materials (both hard copy and online). See the [Copyright Agency website](#).

If the artist was previously registered with Viscopy for voluntary copyright licensing, again you should contact Copyright Agency to arrange the payment of these royalties to the beneficiaries. Check whether Viscopy was also managing the statutory royalties collected for the artist's estate by Copyright Agency. If so, the artist will have been paying two lots of commission and Arts Law recommends that artists and their families cancel the registration with Viscopy for statutory royalties and register directly with Copyright Agency.

If the artist wasn't registered then the beneficiaries can apply for membership with [Copyright Agency online](#). Beneficiaries should mark the box "Owner of copyright in works created by Artist".

Copyright Agency can also manage non-statutory or voluntary copyright licensing for the beneficiaries of the deceased artist's estate<sup>vi</sup>. For example, businesses that want to use copies of the deceased artist's artworks in books, on websites, greeting cards and posters, in newspapers, magazines, television, exhibition catalogues, merchandise, advertising and film can approach Copyright Agency for a license. If the artist's estate is registered for non-statutory licensing, Copyright Agency will negotiate a royalty for that use and, after deducting its fee, will pay the remainder to the persons registered as the artist's beneficiaries. For information, see [Copyright Agency's website](#).

*ii. Aboriginal Artists Agency Limited (AAA):*

AAA represents over 300 Indigenous artists from the Central desert and Arnhem Land areas by providing similar copyright licensing services to those provided by Viscopy. If the deceased artist was registered with AAA, AAA will usually be willing to continue to manage non-statutory licensing for the beneficiaries. Businesses that want to use copies of the deceased artist's artworks in books, on websites, greeting cards and posters, in newspapers, magazines, television, exhibition catalogues, merchandise, advertising and film can approach AAA for a license which will negotiate a royalty for that use and, after deducting its fee, will pay the remainder to the persons registered as the artist's beneficiaries. For information, see [AAA's website](#).

Contact Anthony Wallis at AAA by phone: 0417 230 464 or email: [anthony@aboriginalartists.com.au](mailto:anthony@aboriginalartists.com.au) to find out if the deceased artist was registered for copyright royalties. If the artist was not registered, Arts Law recommends that families enquire as to how the beneficiaries can become registered with AAA so that it can manage the deceased artist's copyright for non- statutory royalties.

AAA generally deals with the situation where an artist has passed away on a case by case basis. It will normally require information which confirms:

- the date of death;
- that the artist had a Will,
- details of the names, contact details and bank account details for the executor, the copyright trustee (if applicable) and the beneficiaries.

*iii. Screenrights:*

Screenrights manages statutory copyright licences for certain uses of audiovisual works (film and video) including uses by government and educational institutions. Often an artistic work such as a painting or sculpture may appear in a film or television broadcast and the owner of copyright in that artwork will share in any royalties collected by Screenrights for the use of that film. For more information see the [Screenrights website](#).

If you know that artworks by the deceased artist appeared in a film or television broadcast, contact Screenrights' Member Services Department to find out if the deceased artist was registered for statutory royalties. Telephone: 02 8038 1300 or email [info@screenrights.org](mailto:info@screenrights.org).

Screenrights can also distribute the statutory royalties collected for the artist's estate by Copyright Agency. However commission will need to be paid to both Copyright Agency and Screenrights for this service and Arts Law recommends that artists and their families register directly with Copyright Agency for statutory royalties.

Screenrights will not necessarily require letters of probate in order to update registration and payment details for the estates of Indigenous artists. The executor should discuss with the Member Relations Manager how to proceed to arrange for payments to go to the copyright trustee or the beneficiaries.

*iv. Other licensing arrangements:*

If there are other licensing deals that were negotiated during the artist's lifetime without involving a collecting society, the executor needs to decide whether those contracts can and should be terminated or whether they should continue. We recommend that the executor get legal advice as to whether each licence is a sensible and commercially reasonable arrangement or whether it should be terminated.

[Document K](#) is a template letter requesting the licensee to pay any royalties to the beneficiaries in the future. If the licensee does not agree, seek legal advice as to whether the licence should be terminated. It may be necessary to get a grant of probate or administration in order to deal with these licences.

**Example:**

The artist had a licence with a souvenir business to use three artworks on stationery and gift cards. The artist's will left everything to his three children in equal shares. The children agreed that they would each take copyright in one of the three works. The souvenir business agreed to pay royalties on the first artwork to the artist's eldest son, on the second artwork to the second son and on the third artwork to the artist's daughter.

The artist also had a licence with a hotel for the use of an artwork on its website. The hotel wouldn't agree to pay the royalties in three shares or deal with the beneficiaries. However the executor registered the artist's estate with Copyright Agency in the names of the three children. The hotel agreed to licence the artwork through Copyright Agency which then then distributed the royalties to the three beneficiaries after deducting its commission.

## Real Estate

The Land Titles Office in the Northern Territory requires a Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration before it will transfer or allow the sale of property owned by the deceased artist.

However, if the deceased artist owned land as a joint tenant, the executor does not need to take any action as the other joint tenant (often the spouse or partner of the deceased person) will automatically become the sole owner.

## Cars and caravans

If the deceased owned a car, it will need to be transferred into the name of the correct beneficiary or, if the car is to be sold so that money can be divided among several beneficiaries, the name of the purchaser.

The Northern Territory Motor Vehicle Registry will need to see a copy of the will and the death certificate. The ownership of a jointly owned vehicle will automatically transfer to the surviving person.

See the [Transport NT website](#) for more information.

## Insurance policies and superannuation funds

Some types of insurance or superannuation policy will include provision for a named beneficiary in the event of the death of the policy holder and may therefore not be covered by the Will.

If the insurance or superannuation payments are covered by the Will, the executor will need to contact the insurance company or superannuation fund to find out whether or not they require a Grant of Probate in order to release the funds to the executor for distribution. In most cases, the trustee of the fund will have the discretion to release the funds directly to the named beneficiaries or the executor without a grant of probate.

## Nursing home accommodation bonds

The executor will need to contact the nursing home to enquire what information it requires in order to release any accommodation bond or accrued social security payments to the executor. In many cases, nursing homes will require a Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration.

## Getting started – Checklist for executors

As can be seen from the above, there are a number of things to think about when managing the affairs of a deceased artist who made a Will before passing away. Set out below is a checklist of matters to consider when embarking on one of the options outlined above:

- a. Find the original Will and make sure that it is the last Will made by the artist.
- b. What was the date on which the artist passed away? Do you have a copy of the Death Certificate? You will probably need one or more certified copies of the Death Certificate and the Will. The Will and the official Death Certificate should be photocopied several times. You can then take those copies to the local police station with the original and ask them to endorse them as certified copies.
- c. Do you need a Grant of Probate to manage the estate of the deceased person? To determine if a Grant of Probate is needed, you must check with the organisations with which the deceased held assets to determine the organisations requirements for transfer of those assets to you or the beneficiaries.
- d. Do you have contact details for all the beneficiaries named in the Will?
- e. Have you contacted all the beneficiaries and explained the terms of the Will. Provide them with a copy of the Will if they ask for one.
- f. Have all the funeral expenses been paid? If so by whom? If there are outstanding debts associated with the funeral, any funds must first be applied to the payment of those before any distribution to the beneficiaries.
- g. If the artist was receiving any benefits from Centrelink, advise Centrelink that the artist has passed away.
- h. If the artist had a car or a drivers licence, advise the Northern Territory Motor Vehicle Registry Department that the artist has passed away.

- i. What did the Artist own at the date of passing away?
  - Paintings
  - Car
  - Bank account
  - House or property
  - Personal belongings
  - Shares, life insurance, superannuation
- j. What's the approximate total value of those items listed above? More than \$20,000?
- k. Was the artist a member of an art centre? Which one? Do they hold any money or paintings belonging to the artist?
- l. Find out if the artist needs to file a tax return. If there is any tax owing, that must be paid before any money can be distributed to the beneficiaries. Many Indigenous artists were considered to be 'hobbyists' the Australia Tax Office while alive and did not have to complete tax returns dealing with income earned from their art. If that is the case then it will not be necessary to file a tax return for the period up to the date of death. However, in relation to any money earned by the estate from sales of artwork after the artist's death, tax may be payable.
- m. Ascertain any other debts of the artist. These must be paid before any distribution to the beneficiaries.
- n. Are there any art galleries holding works of the artist for exhibition and sale? Do you have contact details for them?
- o. Did the Artist have any agreements or licenses about the use of his/her art? If so, can you provide any details?
- p. Did the Artist get royalties from Copyright Agency or Viscopy or Screenrights or any other collecting society?
- q. Is the artist registered for Resale royalties?



# TEMPLATE DOCUMENTS FOR USE WITH THE NORTHERN TERRITORY WILLS KIT

## SCHEDULE OF DOCUMENTS

**Documents A to L** are template letters and forms that you can adapt and use. The yellow highlighting identifies information that you must insert or change to suit your situation.

[Document A](#) is a template letter to the Public Trustee requesting that it administer the estate of the deceased artist in accordance with the terms of the Will.

[Document B](#) is a suggested authority that can be used if the executor named in the Will cannot take on that role.

[Document C](#) is a suggested template letter to send to the bank.

[Document D](#) is a suggested template letter to send to the art centre asking that payments be made into the estate's bank account.

[Document E](#) is an alternative template letter to the art centre authorising it to hold any funds in its account until the executor directs that payments can be made to the beneficiaries.

[Document F](#) is a suggested template letter to send to a gallery or dealer asking it to return any unsold works and make any payments due.

[Document G](#) is an alternative template letter to send to a gallery or dealer asking it to proceed with the exhibition and sale arrangements which were planned during the artist's lifetime.

[Document H](#) is a letter from the artist's art centre to Copyright Agency requesting registration of the estate for resale and statutory royalties.

[Document I](#) is a suggested template letter to Copyright Agency and a statutory declaration which can be signed by the executor and used instead of the art centre letter if the artist was not a member of an art centre.

[Document J](#) is a letter from the art centre to the collecting societies (other than Copyright Agency) advising them that the artist has passed away and asking them to continue paying royalties into the art centre account.

[Document K](#) is a template letter to a copyright licensee requesting the licensee to pay any royalties to the beneficiaries in the future.

## INSTRUCTIONS

This template letters and forms are samples only. You need to change each document to meet your specific circumstances.

At times you need to choose from a few alternatives. Instructions about alternatives or other instructions are written in **BLUE LIKE THIS** and once you have chosen the alternative that suits you, you can delete the blue instructions.

At other times you need to insert information such as names, dates or descriptions that are specific to your letter or form. Where this is necessary you will be prompted by an expression in square brackets in red like this: *[Insert your name and address]*

### Step 1

Read the accompanying information sheet.

### Step 2

Ensure that the letter or form is appropriate for your purpose. If you are unsure, you can contact Arts Law for advice.

### Step 3

You need to create a new document by copying the template you want to use and saving it on your computer. Follow the instructions to complete it. Remember to delete the instructions in **BLUE** and insert all the information identified in **RED**.

### Step 4

If you are not sure whether you have done it properly, you can contact Arts Law and ask whether you are entitled to legal advice under our Artists in the Black program.

**DOCUMENT A***[Date]**[Insert your name and address]***Public Trustee of the Northern Territory**

[

GPO Box 470, Darwin NT 0801;

]

Dear Sir

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named person has passed away. I **enclose** a certified copy of the death certificate. The deceased had a will, a copy of which is also **enclosed**.

*Delete whichever is inapplicable:* The will does not name an executor **OR** The executor named in the will passed away on *[date]* **OR** is unable or unwilling to act.

The assets in the deceased's estate include:

- The moneys in the deceased's bank account with *[name of bank]*, numbered *[account number]*.
- Moneys and paintings of an unknown value held by *[name of arts centre]*, an art centre where the deceased was a member.
- *[OTHER]*

To the best of my knowledge, no person has, or intends, to apply for letters of administration. I request that the Public Trustee of the Northern Territory administer the Estate.

Please let me know if the Public Trustee is willing and able to proceed in this way.

Yours sincerely

*[Beneficiary making application to provide name and sign letter]*

**[Names and Signatures of Other Beneficiaries *[To be provided if possible. This section may otherwise be deleted]*]**

Name	Signature
------	-----------

*[Other beneficiaries to provide name and sign letter]*

**DOCUMENT B****Authority to Act on behalf of All Beneficiaries**

We, the undersigned, are the beneficiaries of the estate of the Late *[Deceased's name]*.

We **enclose** certified copies of *[his/her]* last will and death certificate.

*Delete whichever is inapplicable:*

The will does not name an executor **OR**

The executor named in the will passed away on *[date]* **OR** is unable or unwilling to act.

The assets are not substantial and we do not propose seeking formal letters of Administration.

We authorise *[name of person to act on behalf of beneficiaries]* of *[person's address]* to act on behalf of all of us in all matters relating to the administration of the estate, including the receipt of assets of the estate, such as the funds in *[Deceased's name]'s* bank accounts and works of art belonging to *[Deceased's name]'s* estate.

<b>Name of Beneficiary</b>	<b>Relationship to deceased</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>[Name]</i>	<i>[Relationship]</i>	<i>[Address]</i>	<i>[Signature]</i>	<i>[Date]</i>

**DOCUMENT C**

*[Date]*

*[Insert your name and address]*

*[Name]* Bank  
*[Insert address]*

Dear Sir

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named person has passed away. I **enclose** a certified copy of the death certificate and the last Will of the deceased.

Expenses have been incurred by me in respect of the deceased's funeral of *[\$ Amount]* by *[Person/company who was paid funeral expenses]*. Details are attached.

I am the executor named in the will **OR**

The executor named in the will is unable to act/has passed away and I have agreed to undertake the administration of the estate. The other beneficiaries have consented to this and I enclose an authority signed by them.

The only moneys in the deceased's estate are:

- 1 The moneys in the deceased's bank account with you, numbered *[Insert number]*. I enclose a copy of the *[Most recent statement or the passbook and check book]*.
- 2 Moneys and paintings of an unknown value held by *[Name of arts centre]*, an art centre where the deceased was a member.

*[Other]*

In the circumstances, I am hoping to avoid the need to go to the expense and time of obtaining Letters of Administration.

Please let me know if you are willing and able to proceed in this way.

Yours sincerely

**Executor/Administrator**

**DOCUMENT D**

*[Date]*

*[Insert your name and address]*

*[Name of arts centre]*

*[Insert address]*

Dear Sir/Madam

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named person has passed away. I **enclose** a certified copy of the death certificate and the deceased's last will.

The estate is small but includes moneys and paintings of an unknown value held by you.

In the circumstances, I am hoping to avoid the need to go to the expense and time of obtaining Letters of Administration.

**EITHER** I am the executor named in the will **OR**

The executor named in the will is unable to act/has passed away and I have agreed to undertake the administration of the estate. The other beneficiaries have consented to this and I enclose an authority signed by them.

Please provide me with details of all artwork (including current sales values) and all moneys held by the art centre for the deceased or placed by it on consignment with other galleries. Please also confirm your commission payable upon sale.

In respect for the artist, the family request that all works and images of the artist be removed from public view and sale for a period of *[how many]* weeks/months.

After that time, please proceed with the sale of the artwork consistent with securing the best available prices.

Please deposit all proceeds of such sales and all funds in your account into the estate's bank account as follows:

Account name: *[account name]*

BSB: *[BSB number]*

Account number: *[insert account number]*

Yours sincerely

**Executor/Administrator**

**DOCUMENT E**

*[Date]*

*[Insert your name and address]*

*[Name of arts centre]*

*[Insert address]*

Dear Sir/Madam

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named person has passed away. I **enclose** a certified copy of the death certificate and the last will.

**EITHER** I am the executor named in the will **OR**

The executor named in the will is unable to act/has passed away and I have agreed to undertake the administration of the estate. The other beneficiaries have consented to this and I enclose an authority signed by them.

The estate is small but includes moneys and paintings of an unknown value held by you.

In the circumstances, I am hoping to avoid the need to go to the expense and time of obtaining Letters of Administration.

Please provide me with details of all artwork (including current sales values) and all moneys held by the art centre for the deceased or placed by it on consignment with other galleries. Please also confirm your commission payable upon sale.

In respect for the artist, the family request that all works and images of the artist be removed from public view and sale for a period of *[how many]* weeks/months.

After that time, please proceed with the sale of the artwork consistent with securing the best available prices.

I would be grateful if you could hold all proceeds of such sales and all funds in your account in trust pending further instructions from me as to distribution. As the estate is small, I am hoping to avoid the need to go to the expense and time of obtaining Letters of Administration. Could you please confirm if you are happy to proceed in this way.

Yours sincerely

**Executor/Administrator**

**DOCUMENT F**

*[Date]*

*[Insert author name/address]*

*[Insert name and address of gallery/dealer]*

Dear *[name]*

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named person has passed away. I **enclose** a certified copy of the death certificate and the deceased's last will.

**EITHER** I am the executor named in the will **OR**

The executor named in the will is unable to act/has passed away and I have agreed to undertake the administration of the estate. The other beneficiaries have consented to this and I enclose an authority signed by them.

I understand that you hold artwork placed on consignment for sale with you. Such arrangements are terminated by the death of the artist.

Please provide me with details of all artwork (including current sales values) and all moneys held by you for the deceased. Please also provide a copy of the agreement evidencing your commission payable upon sale.

In respect for the artist, the family have requested that all works and images of the artist be removed from public view and sale. I would be grateful if you would make immediate arrangements to return all unsold works to *[address of art centre/gallery/other place]*.

Please provide a reconciliation and deposit all sales proceeds into the estate's bank account as follows:

Account name: *[account name]*

BSB: *[BSB number]*

Account number: *[insert account number]*

As the estate is small, I am hoping to avoid the need to go to the expense and time of obtaining Letters of Administration. Please let me know if you are happy to proceed in this way.

Yours sincerely

**Executor/Administrator**



**DOCUMENT G**

*[Date]*

*[Insert author name/address]*

*[Insert name and address of gallery/dealer]*

Dear *[name]*

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named person has passed away. I **enclose** a certified copy of the death certificate and the deceased's last will.

**EITHER** I am the executor named in the will **OR** The executor named in the will is unable to act/has passed away and I have agreed to undertake the administration of the estate. The other beneficiaries have consented to this and I enclose an authority signed by them.

I understand that you hold artwork placed on consignment for sale with you. Such arrangements are terminated by the death of the artist.

Please provide me with details of all artwork (including current sales values) and all moneys held by you for the deceased. Please also provide a copy of the agreement evidencing your commission payable upon sale.

In respect for the artist, the family request that all works and images of the artist be removed from public view and sale for a period of *[how many]* weeks/months.

After that time, subject to confirmation and agreement as to your commission terms, the beneficiaries request that you proceed with the exhibition and sale of the artwork consistent with securing the best available prices.

Please deposit all proceeds of such sales and all funds in your account into the estate's bank account as follows:

Account name: *[account name]*

BSB: *[BSB number]*

Account number: *[insert account number]*

As the estate is small, I am hoping to avoid the need to go to the expense and time of obtaining Letters of Administration. Please let me know if you are happy to proceed in this way.

Yours sincerely

**Executor/Administrator**

**DOCUMENT H**

**[Date]**

Copyright Agency Limited  
Level 12, 66 Goulburn Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 AUSTRALIA

By email: [memberservices@copyright.com.au](mailto:memberservices@copyright.com.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**[Name of deceased] (deceased)**

I am writing to inform you that the above named artist passed away at **[place]** on **[date]**. This artist was a member of this art centre from **[year]** to **[year]**. The deceased **was/was not** registered through this art centre with Copyright Agency for both resale and statutory royalties.

I enclose:

- A copy of the artist's last will and the death certificate
- A statutory declaration by me
- Completed artist's beneficiary resale registration form(s)
- Evidence of identity for the applicant(s) (photocopies of drivers licences or Centrelink cards)

The estate is small but includes moneys and paintings valued at approximately **[estimated value]** held at the art centre as well as the deceased's entitlement to resale and statutory royalties. We have made enquiries with the executor and understand that it is not likely that any application for letters of probate will be lodged given the size of the estate.

**EITHER OPTION 1:** Could you please register the beneficiaries as the recipients of any resale royalties and statutory royalties due to the deceased artist's estate in accordance with the terms of the will.

**OR OPTION 2:** The Will nominates **[name]** as the copyright and resale trustee. **He/she** is then responsible for distributing any royalties in accordance with the will. Could you please register that person as the owner of the resale and statutory royalty rights for the artist's estate?

**OR OPTION 3:** The Will nominates **[name]** as the executor. Could you please register the executor as the holder of the resale and statutory royalty rights pending a final distribution of the estate?

Yours sincerely

**Manager, Art Centre**

**DOCUMENT I**

**[Date]**

Copyright Agency Limited  
12, 66 Goulburn Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 AUSTRALIA

By email: [memberservices@copyright.com.au](mailto:memberservices@copyright.com.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**[Name of deceased] (deceased)**

I am writing to inform you that the above named artist passed away at **[place]** on **[date]**. The deceased **was/was not** registered with Copyright Agency for resale and statutory royalties.

I enclose:

- A copy of the artist's last will and the death certificate
- A statutory declaration by me
- Completed artist's beneficiary resale registration form(s)
- Evidence of identity for the applicant(s) (photocopies of drivers licences or Centrelink cards)

**EITHER** I am the executor named in the will **OR** The executor named in the will is unable to act/has passed away and I have agreed to undertake the administration of the estate. The other beneficiaries have consented to this and I enclose an authority signed by them.

The estate is small but includes moneys and paintings valued at approximately **[estimated value]** as well as the deceased's entitlement to resale and statutory royalties. I am not intending to apply for letters of probate given the size of the estate.

**EITHER OPTION 1:** Could you please register me as the holder of the resale and statutory royalty rights pending a final distribution of the estate.

**OR OPTION 2:** Could you please register the beneficiaries as the recipients of any resale royalties and statutory royalties due to the deceased artist's estate in accordance with the terms of the will.

**OR OPTION 3:** The Will nominates **[name]** as the copyright and resale trustee. **He/she** is then responsible for distributing any royalties in accordance with the will. Could you please register that person as the owner of the resale and statutory royalty rights for the artist's estate?

Yours sincerely

**Executor/Administrator**

Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act 2010  
**Statutory Declaration**  
Northern Territory

I *[insert full name]*

Of *[insert address]* in the Northern Territory

solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. [name] passed away on [date].
2. I attach a true copy of the deceased's last will.
3. To the best of my knowledge there is no later will and no challenge to the validity of this will.

This declaration is true and I know it is an offence to make a statutory declaration knowing it is false in a material particular.

Signature of declarant

Taken and declared before me at *[location]*

This .....day of .....

A Justice of the Peace/Commissioner for Declarations

**DOCUMENT J**

*[Date]*

Choose either AAA or Screenrights – not both

**Aboriginal Artists Agency Limited**

PO Box 282

CAMMERAY 2062

email; [anthony@aboriginalartists.com.au](mailto:anthony@aboriginalartists.com.au)

**Screenrights**

PO Box 853

Broadway NSW 2007

email: [info@screenrights.org](mailto:info@screenrights.org)

Dear Sir/Madam

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named artist passed away at *[place]* on *[date]*. This artist was a member of this art centre from *[year]* to *[year]*. The deceased was registered with your collecting society with royalties going directly to the art centre account.

I enclose a copy of the artist's last will and the death certificate

The estate is small but includes moneys and paintings valued at approximately *[estimated value]* held at the art centre as well as the deceased's entitlement to statutory and voluntary copyright royalties. The executor is not intending to apply for letters of probate given the size of the estate and wishes all royalty payments to continue to be paid into the art centre account. We will distribute those payments to the beneficiaries in accordance with the will and the executor's instructions.

**EITHER OPTION 1:** Could you please register the executor *[name]* as the holder of all statutory and voluntary copyright royalty rights pending a final distribution of the estate.

**OR OPTION 2:** Could you please register the beneficiaries as the recipients of all statutory and voluntary copyright royalties due to the deceased artist's estate in accordance with the terms of the will.

**OR OPTION 3:** The Will nominates *[name]* as the copyright and resale trustee. *He/she* is then responsible for distributing any royalties in accordance with the will. Could you please register that person as the owner of all statutory and voluntary copyright royalty rights for the artist's estate?

Please note that I have already contacted Copyright Agency Limited in relation to the resale and statutory royalty rights it administers.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

**Manager, Art Centre**

**DOCUMENT K**

*[Date]*

*[Insert author name and address]*

*[Insert name and address of licensee]*

Dear *[Name]*

*[Name of deceased]* (deceased)

I am writing to inform you that the above named person has passed away. I **enclose** a certified copy of the death certificate and the deceased's last will.

**EITHER** I am the executor named in the will **OR** The executor named in the will is unable to act/has passed away and I have agreed to undertake the administration of the estate. The other beneficiaries have consented to this and I enclose an authority signed by them.

As the estate is small, I am hoping to avoid the need to go to the expense and time of obtaining Letters of Administration.

The beneficiaries wish to continue with the licensing arrangements made during the deceased's lifetime. The beneficiaries entitled to the proceeds of the licensing agreement are as follows:

*[List beneficiaries and shares]*

Please forward me a new licensing agreement for signature.

Please let me know if you are willing and able to proceed in this way and I will advise of new bank details for the payments to be made.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

**Executor/Administrator**

## Disclaimer

The information in this information sheet is general. It does not constitute, and should be not relied on as, legal advice. The Arts Law Centre of Australia (**Arts Law**) recommends seeking advice from a qualified lawyer on the legal issues affecting you before acting on any legal matter.

While Arts Law tries to ensure that the content of this information sheet is accurate, adequate or complete, it does not represent or warrant its accuracy, adequacy or completeness. Arts Law is not responsible for any loss suffered as a result of or in relation to the use of this information sheet. To the extent permitted by law, Arts Law excludes any liability, including any liability for negligence, for any loss, including indirect or consequential damages arising from or in relation to the use of this information sheet.

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*You may photocopy this information sheet for a non-profit purpose, provided you copy all of it, and you do not alter it in any way. Check you have the most recent version by contacting us on (02) 9356 2566 or toll-free outside Sydney on 1800 221 457.*

*This information kit was developed with funding from the Copyright Agency Ltd.*



<sup>i</sup> *Wills Act 2000 (NT)* section 34

<sup>ii</sup> A statutory body established by the *Public Trustee Act 1979 (NT)*

<sup>iii</sup> *Administration and Probate Act 1993 (NT)* s110A

<sup>iv</sup> *Supreme Court Regulations (NT)* reg 5

<sup>v</sup> *Administration and Probate Act 1993 (NT)* s 106

<sup>vi</sup> Copyright Agency manages this business on behalf of Viscopy.