

Going out with a bang

When his mum died, Craig Hull, a seasoned professional in the funeral industry, experienced the profound impact of loss first-hand.

"I'm usually on the other side of memorials, so it felt strange," says Hull, founder of Ashes to Ashes, a fireworks funeral service.

The seed for Ashes to Ashes was sown during a pivotal moment in Hull's life.

A former circus performer, in 2000 he took part in the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony. When a fellow performer passed away, a unique celebration of his life was needed. "His partner wanted to sprinkle his ashes around the Olympic stadium. I said, why don't you share some with me?"

Being a trapezist, Hull's was able to release these ashes mid-flight over the performance area. It was a unique way to remember his artist friend.



In the years after, Hull became a pyrotechnician. When his dogs died, it occurred to him that he could give them a similarly unique send off.

The beach was a special place for Hull and his companions so, after cremating them, he placed their ashes inside a firework and used its flaming brilliance to celebrate their lives.

"Watching my beautiful girl and boy released out over the ocean was an incredible experience.

We all love fireworks; the sound, the smell, the colour. I thought, what a great connection between life and death," he says.

"[Then I thought that] other people should be able to have this experience without being a pyrotechnician, and so Ashes to Ashes was born."

Many years later, Hull was confronted by the deaths of his parents. They had a loving 58-year marriage, yet very different

expectations for their funerals. "Mum didn't want fireworks; she was always more traditional." She chose a conventional burial in a casket. Her funeral was handled by Simplicity Funerals in Tweed Heads, an InvoCare brand and the family was happy with the service they received.

"They were fantastic and had a lot of compassion," he says.

By contrast, his father had wanted a more individual send-off. He chose to be memorialised in a fireworks display so Hull and Ashes to Ashes were able to step right in.

"With Dad, I remember him being launched off the barge and lighting up the sky," he says.

While Hull says fireworks aren't the way that everyone wants to be remembered, his business offers a service that reflects the individual nature of life and death.

"It's your final choice – go out with a bang, I say. Mourning is unavoidable, but if you shift the focus away from the physical death into a nice memory, it does a lot." ■