



# Media Release

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**SENATOR THE HON KAY PATTERSON**  
Minister for Health and Ageing

**19<sup>TH</sup> February**

**NEXT OF KIN CAN GET INFORMATION ABOUT ASHED BONES AND  
RETAINED ORGANS AND TISSUES**

From next Monday, next of kin will be able to obtain information about the identity and whereabouts of ashed bone samples used in nuclear fallout research from 1957-78 and organs and tissues retained after autopsy, the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Kay Patterson, announced today.

Releasing a package of information incorporating posters and pamphlets for the public and health care professionals, Senator Patterson said the public information campaign follows investigations conducted by the Australian Health Ethics Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council into past practices by hospitals of retaining organs and tissues and ashed bones for research and teaching purposes, without permission from relatives.

"This campaign, which has been developed and endorsed by all Australian Health Ministers, includes the release of a strong new set of ethical guidelines - a National Code of Ethical Autopsy Practice - which strives to ensure that families are as involved as they wish to be in the decision making process about autopsies.

"The code includes guidelines for what should be covered on hospital autopsy request forms and best practice for caring for bereaved families.

"The national communication strategy and information phone lines are aimed at allowing families to make inquiries when and if they are ready. We understand that some families would like information to determine for themselves what details they would like to know."

Senator Patterson said after carefully checking all available records, the type of information that would be provided to inquirers could include whether any organs or ashed bones samples were retained; if material was retained but subsequently disposed of; whether or not any retained material still exists, and where material still exists; and options for disposal or continued use.

"Families will be able to seek information on dedicated phone numbers in every State and Territory in Australia if they are concerned that a family member may have been involved. These phone numbers are on the pamphlets and posters, which are available at Medicare offices and other community agencies nationally," Senator Patterson said.

The information available will depend on what records can be accessed and usually will only be released to the senior available next of kin of the person who died.

Further information can be obtained on [www.dhs.sa.gov.au/autopsy-organs](http://www.dhs.sa.gov.au/autopsy-organs) including information in a number of community languages.

**INFORMATION PHONE LINES, TO BE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC FROM  
NEXT MONDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2003 ARE:**

<b>ACT</b>	<b>02 62442870</b>
<b>NSW</b>	<b>1800 225822</b>
<b>NT</b>	<b>1800 300028</b>
<b>QLD</b>	<b>1800 449171</b>
<b>SA</b>	<b>08 81616550</b>
<b>TAS</b>	<b>1800 420101</b>
<b>VIC</b>	<b>1300 657050</b>
<b>WA</b>	<b>1300 135030</b>

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