

# Cemeteries and Crematoria Program Newsletter

April 2005

## **Appointment of cemetery trust members**

The Governor in Council has approved all appointment applications received by the department prior to December 2004 for small and medium cemeteries.

The department has advised all applicants of their appointment in writing, and will advise their trusts in writing over the next few weeks.

All other appointment applications are being processed and the department will notify trusts of the outcome of these applications shortly.

## **Revised application kit**

The appointment process for small and medium cemetery trusts has been simplified and a new appointment package will be forwarded to trusts over the next few weeks. If you have any queries regarding the appointment process, please contact the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program.

## **Advertising vacant trust positions**

The department has received from a number of trusts that have advertised trust member vacancies that

the advertising has helped them to attract new members from their local community.

Remember, all trust vacancies must be advertised. Please contact the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program when your trust has a vacancy and the department in your local paper(s) on your trust's behalf. The department will meet all costs relating to advertising.

## **Resignations**

When a trust member resigns they will need to either write a letter or complete a 'trust member resignation form' available from the program, or the program web site.

The resignation from or letter will need to be returned to the program who will formally submit the form to the Governor in Council for endorsement.

## **Recognition of service**

The department welcomes the opportunity to recognise the invaluable role played by volunteer trust members in operating cemeteries in Victoria.

Certificates of appreciation are available for retiring members; please contact

the program if you would like a certificate for a retiring member of your trust.

## **Applications for fee increases**

When a trust wants to increase its fees above the CPI it will need to provide an explanation supporting the increase. This explanation will need to be provided with the 'Scales of Fees application form'.

Please do not provide your justification for the fee increase on the 'Scales of Fees application form' as this needs to be presented to the Governor in Council for approval. When a trust is introducing a fee for the first time it will need to advise the department.

The program reviews fees prior to their formal submission.

The process for fee approvals will change with the implementation of the new Act. The department will accept applications for fee increases until 29 April 2005.

The Cemeteries Act Implementation Team will provide detailed information regarding the changes to the process in the lead up to the implementation of the new Act.

## Upcoming survey

The program is developing a new database and will require additional information from cemetery trusts to build accurate profiles for cemeteries across the state. Over the next few months the department will contact your trust by phone to conduct a survey.

The survey will include questions regarding burial data, land use, and some financial information. This information will be beneficial to the department for various projects the department is undertaking. Your cooperation would be greatly appreciated.

## Radiation safety information

The Radiation Safety Program of the department, in conjunction with the Victorian Branch of the ACCA (Australian Cemeteries and Crematoria Association), has developed an information sheet for people dealing with deceased persons containing radiopharmaceuticals. Radiopharmaceuticals are used for treatment and diagnosis.

In the unlikely case that a patient dies with a significant radioactivity, the treating hospital will ensure that the body is not released until the radioactivity has decayed to an acceptable level. When the body is required to be released prior to this time, any embalming should be done under the supervision of a Radiation Safety Officer, or an appropriately qualified physicist.

More information can be found in the pamphlet: *Information for people handling deceased persons containing radiopharmaceuticals* on the department's radiation safety website: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/radition/publications.htm>.

Further queries can be directed to Dr Brad Cassels, Manager Radiation Safety Program 03 9637 4167 or the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program.

## Insurance

The department provides liability insurance cover for cemetery trusts through the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA).

## Property under construction

Cover for existing property or that under construction (including public liability for building works) is not provided by the VMIA for cemetery trusts. This cover should be purchased separately if required.

## Trust members over the age of 60

The department has raised the issue of insurance cover for trust members over the age of 60 with the VMIA as a result of a number of queries from trust members. Unfortunately the data held by the program does not include birthdays for all trust members, so identifying all of the trust members in this group is difficult.

If you fit into this category please contact the program to notify us of your birthday for our records. The department will then use this information to determine the number of trust members who fit into

this category and will seek advice from the VMIA, and correspond further with cemetery trusts regarding the outcome.

## Insurance guidelines for cemetery trusts

The VMIA has guidelines available for cemetery trusts outlining the type of cover provided by the department's policy. The manual can be access online at:

<http://www.vmia.vic.gov.au/healthcare/documents/Manual-CemeteryTrusts04-05.pdf>

For further advice regarding insurance please contact the program.

## Abstracts of Accounts

Your Abstract of Accounts for the 2004 calendar year was due to the department on 1 March 2005. Submitting annual abstracts is a statutory requirement under the current legislation.

Certificates as to the balance of investments and bank accounts at the end of the periods should also be supplied with your completed abstract.

Trusts with reserves in excess of \$25,000 should also provide an audited statement of their accounts.

Enclosed are two Abstract of Accounts forms. Please forward returns to the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program.

From 1 July 2005 trusts will be required to submit abstracts to the department for each financial year rather than each calendar year. To

facilitate the change from calendar year to financial year, reporting cemetery trusts are required to submit an abstract for the first six months of 2005. Further information on the new reporting requirements will be provided to you in April in the next *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* bulletin no. 5.

### **Victorian Community Foundation – Holsworth Cemetery Endowment Fund**

The *Victorian Community Foundation – Holsworth Cemetery Endowment Fund* has made a significant contribution to the preservation of gravestones and monuments in cemeteries in Victoria. Since its establishment in 1993 the fund has distributed 48 grants valued at over \$14,000 to Victorian cemetery groups. Grants have been used to preserve significant graves and sites, provide the public with information and facilities and support the work of local volunteers.

The Trustees of the Fund have recently reviewed the focus of granting and the trust name has been modified to the *Victorian Community Foundation – Holsworth Local Heritage Trust*. In the future the Trust will support heritage preservation by providing grants for the publication of local and other history in rural Victoria.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Maria Stylianou, ANZ Charitable Services on 03 9273 2701.

### **Native Vegetation**

As you may be aware, the department is currently undertaking a project relating to native vegetation in cemeteries.

It has come to our attention that a number of trusts may have had some experience with native vegetation management, in conjunction with their local councils and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), in their cemetery.

If you have been issued with advice relating to native vegetation form either your council or DSE, or you have developed a vegetation management plan, it would be appreciated if you could advise the program, as it would be beneficial to our understanding of the possible extent and applicability of the project, and to our understanding of native vegetation issues.

### **Free plots for trust members**

It has come to the attention of the department that some trusts may have set aside plots for trust members free of charge. Trusts do not have the power under the Act to waive the gazetted fee for a right of burial for a trust member. This practice should be discontinued immediately. If you have any queries about this matter, please contact the department.

### **Untidy cemetery grounds**

As you are aware cemetery trusts are established under the *Cemeteries Act 1958* to maintain and administer cemeteries in Victoria. This

includes keeping the grounds in a reasonable condition.

Ideally, grass areas should be kept tidy and weeds should be kept under control.

The department has access to a small maintenance fund that can be used to provide those cemetery trusts with limited resources with a maintenance grant to assist them to keep the cemetery tidy.

Cemetery trusts wishing to apply for a maintenance grant should write to the Manager Cemeteries and Crematoria Program, GPO Box 1670N, Melbourne 3001.

If your trust elects to apply for a maintenance grant it will need to clearly explain how the grant will be used. If your trust's application for a maintenance grant is successful your trust will be expected to provide the department with before and after photographs of the maintenance work undertaken.

### **Maintenance grants 2004**

Last financial year's grants have been distributed. A total of \$80,000 was made available by the department.

In the new financial year we will endeavour to make the first round of grants in January with a second round towards July.

### **To all cemetery trusts**

Please keep the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program informed of any changes in

the status of members in your trust.

Your co-operation in this matter will ensure that you will always receive important information and correspondence from the department.

## **Who's who in the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program**

The Cemeteries and Crematoria Program of the department consists of:

- Anna Achia, Acting Manager
- Carol Buttigieg, Project Officer
- John Bernabo, Project Officer
- Bjorn Zangmeister, Administration Officer

Norman Roberts, after 15 years service in the department, has retired.

## **Manual for Victorian Cemetery Trusts**

This manual provides trust members with invaluable information on a range of issues that impact on trusts.

The manual is available online via the programs website and can be found by clicking on the 'Cemeteries and Cemetery Trusts in Victoria' area in the website, alternatively, you can contact the program and a hard copy will be forwarded to you on request.

## **Contact information**

Cemeteries and Crematoria Program, Department of Human Services

Telephone: 03 9637 4160  
Toll free: 1800 034 280  
Facsimile: 03 9637 4290

Email:  
[Cemeteries&Crematoria@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Cemeteries&Crematoria@dhs.vic.gov.au)

Internet:  
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries>

## **Insurance**

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority

Telephone: 03 9911 6900

Email:  
[office@vmia.vic.gov.au](mailto:office@vmia.vic.gov.au)

Internet:  
<http://www.vmia.vic.gov.au>