

Cemeteries and Crematoria Program Newsletter

December 2006

Introduction

Welcome to the December 2006 edition of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program Newsletter. This edition provides you with some brief information in relation to current cemetery matters.

For more detailed information regarding cemetery operations, please refer to the program's website at: www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries or call the program on: 1800 034 280.

Election Arrangements

The government is in "caretaker mode" until 21 December 2006.

Applications for trust member appointments, resignations or removals received leading up to and during the caretaker period will be submitted for approval in January 2007.

Fees

Approval of existing fees

Any trust that has not submitted its fees to DHS for approval under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* will need to submit them by end February 2007.

Approval of new or altered fees

Any applications for new or altered fees must be justified. This justification must be provided in writing along with the fee application.

To enable the application of Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases to fees by 1 July 2007, no new or altered fees will be processed between 1 March 2007 – 31 May 2007.

Timeline for CPI Increase

February 2007

Any trust that does not wish to have a CPI increase applied to their fees for the 2006 – 2007 financial year must provide written advice to the department.

March -April 2007

CPI adjusted fees will be forwarded to trusts for verification. Trusts should contact the department if there are any problems with the fees forwarded to them.

1 June 2007

The Secretary will make a declaration that the CPI fee increases will be applicable from 1 July 2007.

1 July 2007

CPI increases will take effect.

Website

The program is currently validating all fees on the program database and website. Fees will be re-loaded onto the website in January and any subsequent changes made, as approved.

Maintenance Grants – 2005 / 2006

The program is currently considering grants submissions received to date for the 2005-2006 funding allocation. Additional submissions will be considered up until the end of February 2007.

Any cemeteries seeking a maintenance grant should submit their application to the program by end February 2007.

Abstract of Accounts

Abstracts of Accounts for the 2005-2006 financial year were due with DHS by 1 September 2006.

Any trusts that have not submitted their Abstract of Accounts for the 2005-2006 financial year should do so as soon as possible.

Native Vegetation

Native vegetation assessment reports and management plans for 4 pilot trusts will be finalised in Dec/Jan. These will subsequently be presented to the trusts and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) for approval and implementation.

Guidelines and report templates will be developed for an industry launch, for use by other trusts affected by native vegetation controls.

Any trusts experiencing difficulties with native vegetation issues should contact the program for assistance.

Insurance

The department is continuing to work with the VMIA to review personal accident insurance for trust members and property insurance for trusts.

Trusts will be advised of the outcome of these negotiations.

Code of Practice

Twenty trusts were requested to formally adopt the Code of Practice at a trust meeting and advise the department of this in writing before 30 September 2006.

Those trusts that have not provided this information to the department should do so as soon as possible.

Additional copies of the code can be downloaded from the program's website or requested from the program.

Chart of Accounts

The Chart of Accounts and Costing study report was finalised in October 2006. A hard copy was sent to Cemeteries and the report is available on the program's website.

A tender to assist trusts to implement the Chart is currently being prepared, for implementation in March 2007.

Accounting Policy Working Group (APWG)

The APWG has met four times to date and is working on a range of issues as follows:

- Classification of land for interment.
- Methodology to value cemetery land.
- Accounting policy issues relating to perpetual maintenance obligations.

The next meeting is scheduled for 7 February 2007.

Move to DSE

DHS was recently advised that the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program will be moving from DHS to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) in 2007.

At this stage the program has no further details about the move, except that it will occur after the review of the cemeteries industry by the State Services Authority, in approximately June 2007.

Further details will be provided as they become available.

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The program wishes all trust members and staff a safe and merry Christmas and a happy new year!