

# Cemeteries and Crematoria Program Newsletter

December 2007

## Introduction

Welcome to the December 2007 edition of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program (the program) Newsletter. This edition provides important information about good governance, financial management of trusts, and reminders about current trust reporting requirements.

## REMINDERS

### Abstracts of accounts

If you have not yet returned your trust's Abstract of Accounts for the financial year 2006/2007 please do so as soon as possible, as this is a statutory requirement under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* (under Section 52 of the Act, an Abstract detailing the financial transactions for that year must be signed as correct by three trust members and lodged with the Department of Human Services by the 1st September every year).

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

Certificates as to the balance of investments and bank accounts at the end of the period should also be supplied. Please forward returns to the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program.

Any trust experiencing difficulty completing the abstracts should contact the program for assistance.

### Maintenance grants

During 2006-2007 the department provided a total of \$292,667 in maintenance grant funding, predominately to assist small rural trusts with essential repairs and maintenance activities.

The program is currently accepting grant submissions for the 2007-2008 funding allocation. Application forms are available from the program's website or by contacting the program. Please ensure that all applications include relevant supporting documentation.

Please note that this year grants will no longer be paid via cheque, but rather will be deposited directly into the trust's bank account. Please include current trust bank account details with all grant applications.

Trusts will only need to provide this information once as these details will be retained on the department's finance database for future reference.

### Trust member information

If trust members have retired, or changed their contact details please advise the program in writing so the database can be updated.

### Cemetery trust manual

The revised *Cemetery Trust Manual* which incorporates the provisions of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* is now available for download from the program's website.

### Fees

A reminder that all applications for new fees or increased fees must be accompanied by a written justification outlining why the fee or increase is necessary. A complete break down of the cost elements that contribute to the fee amount must also be provided.

## GOOD GOVERNANCE

### Good governance of cemetery trusts

Cemetery trusts are established to govern the operations of the cemeteries under their control.

"Governance" encompasses the processes by which organisations are directed, controlled and held to account. Governance also refers to the authority, accountability, stewardship, leadership, direction and control exercised in an organisation.

Good governance provides the foundation for high performance. It strengthens community confidence in a public entity, and helps ensure entities' reputations are maintained and

enhanced. Good governance enables entities to perform efficiently and effectively, and to respond strategically to changing demands.

A cemetery trust will draw on a range of resources to design its governance framework, including state and commonwealth legislation (external elements) as well as strategic documents developed by the trust (internal elements).

More detailed information and advice including a detailed list of the elements of a good governance framework is available from the State Services Authority's website at [www.ssa.vic.gov.au](http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au)

## Cemetery Trust Meetings

Cemetery trusts meetings are a critical part of the governance process. They provide the main opportunity for members to obtain and exchange information and to make decisions.

All trusts should ensure they have clear procedures, based on good governance principles of transparency, integrity, honesty and accountability that will provide a framework for conducting meetings and recording decisions.

Please remember that trusts should hold at least one public meeting each year to canvass the views of their local communities about the cemeteries operations.

More information on trust meetings can be obtained at: <http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au>

## CEMETERY RECORDS Register of interments

Section 59 of the Act requires that details of all interments including bodily and cremated remains within a cemetery shall be maintained in a register.

Section 5 of the Regulations provides details of specific information that must be maintained in the register and to assist trusts, the department has available an Interment register for trusts to use. The register is available in bound book or in electronic form.

Trusts may also wish to maintain the following additional information to that which is included in the register:

- Details of pre-payments to trust for the grave or interment
- Brief biographical information
- Name of funeral director
- Details of monument or plaque.

## Cemetery plans

It is imperative that the trust maintains a plan of its cemeteries that is accurate to scale, current and complete (as far as possible).

The location of all graves, and other interment locations, should be detailed on the plan and these locations should be cross-referenced to the trust's interment register.

Where possible this plan should detail the location of all principal fixtures within the cemetery (buildings, roads, garden beds, niche walls, taps, power poles), together with plotting the course of any underground services (such as water pipes).

## Interment registers and plans

A reminder that trusts should ensure they have one or more back-up sets of their interment registers, cemetery plans and other principal records, stored at locations separate to the working set in case of fire. This is particularly important if the records and plans are maintained by computer, which can be subject to equipment malfunction or burglary.

## Contact Information

**Phone:** 1800 034 280

**Fax:** 9096 9186

**Web:** [www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries)

### Postal Address

Cemeteries & Crematoria Program  
Department of Human Services  
PO Box 4057  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

### Street Address

50 Lonsdale Street Melbourne  
(Please phone ahead for an appointment).

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

