

Cemeteries and Crematoria Program

Newsletter July 2004

New Cemeteries and Crematoria Web Site

The department has redeveloped the cemeteries and crematoria web site.

The web site includes valuable information for trusts including information regarding the new Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003, forms and documents for download, links and newsletters, and the Cemetery Trust Manual.

If you have a suggestion regarding information you would like to see on the web site, please contact the program.

The cemeteries web site can be found at www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries

Trust Manual

The Cemetery Trust Manual has been published on the departments cemeteries web site. It is available online for downloading and printing.

The Cemetery Trust Manual has been developed to assist cemetery trusts members to understand and meet their obligations under the *Cemeteries Act 1958*. A sub committee of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Association of Victoria (CCAV) prepared the manual in conjunction with an officer from the department.

The manual is based on the provisions of the *Cemeteries Act 1958*

which will continue to have effect until 1 July 2005.

Revised Trust Member Appointment Guidelines

Revised government *Guidelines for the Appointment and Remuneration of Part-Time Non-Executive Directors of State Government Boards and Members of Statutory Boards and Advisory Committees* have been issued.

These Guidelines apply to all volunteer appointments to statutory boards in Victoria.

The Guidelines aim to ensure appointments more accurately reflect the composition of the Victorian community, seeking representation of women, increasing the participation of indigenous Victorians across all levels of Government, reflect Victoria's cultural diversity and give young Victorians an opportunity for participation.

The Guidelines establish and maintain systems and processes for good governance by ensuring the accountability of the trust to consumers and the public. They highlight the importance of the role of trust members and recognise that the needs of the community regularly change and that these needs are continually assessed.

The Cemeteries and Crematoria program has developed and distributed a ***trust member appointment package*** to explain the requirements of the revised guidelines, and to provide trusts and applicants with the necessary forms to assist the

trust and applicants to meet the appointment requirements.

Your trust should have already received a trust member appointment package.

The trust member appointment package is also available online at the departments Cemeteries and Crematoria web site.

Your trust will also receive a **Cemetery Trust Kit**, which is a folder containing a copy of the letter recently sent to trusts regarding the appointment guidelines, the information kit for trusts, the trust member appointment package and this newsletter.

The folder is a resource that the trust can use to keep information distributed by the department such as application forms, newsletters and other relevant documents.

Additional copies of forms, guidelines and newsletters can be downloaded from the web site, or obtained by contacting the Cemeteries and Crematoria program.

Application timelines

In order to facilitate the processing and implementation of the new appointment requirements, applications for appointment will now be processed in a cycle. An information sheet is attached that outlines the application cycle and the closing dates for applications throughout the year.

Applications received prior to the end of July 2004 will be processed in the August cycle.

If your trust has applications pending, please encourage your prospective trust members to complete an application using the new forms and return the application to the department for processing.

The department will make every effort to ensure that these applications are processed as quickly as possible.

If you have any queries regarding the revised guidelines for appointment, please contact the Cemeteries and Crematoria program.

F.A.Q. - Appointment applications

The Program has received a number of queries relating to the revised government appointment guidelines. The following Question and Answer segment of the newsletter will address the questions recently received by the department in relation to the revised guidelines.

Do I have to pay for the ITSA, ASIC and probity checks?

No. The department will fund the cost of these checks on behalf of trust members. The Vic Police form should be returned to the department with the completed application so that we can forward it to Vic Police who will invoice the department for the cost of this check. **Please note that Victoria Police require a copy of the applicant's passport, driver's licence or birth certificate in order to process the check.**

What if I already have a police certificate?

If you have already obtained a probity check with Vic Police and have a valid police certificate from within the last 12 months,

then you do not have to undergo another check. You should provide the department with a certified copy of your current police certificate with your application. (A certified copy is a copy certified as 'a true copy of the original' by a Justice of the Peace, Pharmacist, or other authorised person. For further information about certified copies, please contact the program.)

Do applicants for reappointment have to complete a new application when their term expires?

Yes. All vacant positions on your trust need to be advertised, this includes the positions of members due for reappointment. The process for selection should be followed as outlined in the trust member appointment package and applications completed for any members nominated for appointment or reappointment.

Do the revised guidelines apply to life members?

No, those trust members appointed prior to 1996 (or life members) do not have to reapply for reappointment as a trust member and are therefore not affected by the revised guidelines.

Will the department tell me who I need to nominate for appointment?

No. The trust is in the best position to make decisions regarding the composition of the trust. The guidelines have been put in place to ensure that the selection process is fair and open to all members of the community. However the trust will be in the best position to evaluate expressions of interest it receives, arrange and conduct interviews, then shortlist and select the candidates with the skill set that is suitable for the operation of the trust. Only applicants who have been interviewed and selected by the trust should complete an application to be forwarded to the department.

If you have any questions regarding the appointment

process please contact the program for advice.

Cemetery Fee Increases

All applications for fee increases received by the department after the end of July 2004 will be processed in a cycle. Please refer to the attached information sheet for application timelines.

Please Note

Where a request to increase a trusts fee exceeds the departments recommended fee scale or the average CPI the trust must provide and explanation justifying this increase. This explanation should not be included on the fee application form. It should be provided on a separate document attached to your fee application form listing the existing fees, the new fees and an explanation regarding why the trust needs to increase its fees above the average CPI rate.

The normal application form for a fee increase that is submitted to Governor in Council should itemise only those fees that the trust intends to increase. Three trust members must sign this form.

Signing official documents

Please ensure that all official documents forwarded to the Department are signed in blue ink, this includes fees and application forms.

New Arrangements for Cemetery Trust Fees

The new *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* states that in setting fees and charges a cemetery trust must have regard to:

the costs of operating and managing the public cemetery; and the need to provide for the maintenance of the cemetery in perpetuity.

To assist trusts to meet these requirements over the coming months the

departments Cemeteries Act Implementation Team will develop a new approach to assessing fees charged by cemetery trusts. All existing fees and any new fees proposed by trusts will be reviewed. The Cemeteries Act Implementation Team will forward further details about the new arrangements shortly.

In the meantime if trusts require further information about the fee review please contact the Cemeteries Act Implementation Team on 03 9637 4824 or 1800 034 280.

Overdue Abstracts of Accounts

Trusts are reminded that all 2003 abstracts of accounts should already have been submitted in accordance with the *Cemeteries Act 1958*. Outstanding abstracts need to be presented to the department as soon as possible.

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

Trusts are also reminded to provide certificates that detail the balance of investments and accounts. Trusts with reserves in excess of \$25,000 (i.e. the balance of bank accounts, investments, lawn cemetery reservation funds and perpetual maintenance trust accounts) are required to provide an audited statement of their accounts.

Recognition of Trust Member Service

The department produces Certificates of Appreciation for retiring and long serving trust members, in appreciation of their service to the trust and to the community.

Please advise the department if you would like a certificate for a retiring or long serving member of your cemetery trust.

Changes in Cemetery Trust Membership

Please keep the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program informed of **all** changes to the status of members in your trust.

Should trust members be nominated for a position on the trust (eg. Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer), resign from the trust or change address/contact telephone number, these changes should be communicated in a letter addressed to the department.

Maintenance Grants

Last financial year the department distributed \$80,000 in maintenance grants to trusts.

Maintenance grants can be applied for by those cemetery trusts that require additional funds for maintenance work or equipment. Last financial year grants were allocated for a range of items including; lawn mowers, tree removal and the creation of safe pathways. Preference is always given to small operating cemetery trusts.

Further information on next year's maintenance grants, and application information will be sent out to trusts later in the year.

Correspondence and Enquiries

Please direct all correspondence to the **Cemeteries and Crematoria Program** or where appropriate, **the Manager Cemeteries and Crematoria Program**. Please do not address correspondence to specific officers.

Telephone enquiries should be directed through the two main cemeteries phone numbers below, this ensures that your call will be answered and directed appropriately.

Contact the Cemeteries & Crematoria Program

Please direct any enquiries relating to the information in this newsletter to:

Cemeteries and Crematoria Program
Department of Human Services
GPO Box 1670N
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Telephone: (03) 9637 4160
Toll free: 1800 034 280
Fax: (03) 9637 4290

Email:
Cemeteries&Crematoria@dhs.vic.gov.au

Internet:
www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries

Remember the Cemeteries and Crematoria website has all the forms and guidelines discussed in this newsletter and a range of other information that is useful for trust members including:

- The implementation of the new Cemeteries Act.
- The Cemetery Trust Manual.
- Acts and regulations that relate directly to the industry.
- Previous departmental newsletters.