

Cemeteries and Crematoria Program Newsletter

September 2007

Introduction

Welcome to the September 2007 edition of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Program (the program) Newsletter. This edition provides important information about recent changes in Government, and reminders about upcoming trust reporting requirements.

New Minister

As part of Premier Brumby's recent Cabinet reshuffle, the Hon Daniel Andrews MP has been named as the new Minister for Health, making him responsible for the cemeteries and crematoria sector.

Minister Andrews has considerable knowledge of the cemeteries sector, and should be familiar to many of you via his former role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

SSA review

The State Services Authority (SSA) have now finalised their review of cemetery trust governance and effectiveness, providing their final report to the Minister for Health on 29 June 2007.

The department would like to thank all trusts that contributed to the review. Government will now consider the SSA's recommendations together with stakeholder views in determining future directions for the cemeteries sector.

Fees

CPI increase to fees

Under Section 43 of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 (the Act), all trust fees of \$50 or more are increased annually in accordance with the CPI. In June 2007 this increase was applied to trust fees for the first time.

This was a significant piece of work for both trusts and the program, requiring over

15,000 separate fees to be reviewed and processed within an eight-week period.

The CPI adjustment came into effect on 1 July 2007; all trusts should ensure that they are now charging their new fees.

NOTE: Any trust that has not yet updated and returned the fee scale sent out in May 2007 should contact the program.

Increases above the CPI and new fees

Where a trust needs to introduce new fees or increase existing fees above CPI, a separate application must be made to the program. Fee application forms are available from the program's website.

All applications for new 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.

Fee review project

A number of fee related issues were identified during the CPI adjustment process. The program will begin working with trusts on a fee review project.

The fee review project will look at a range of fee related issues including how fees are submitted and processed, a policy for applying the standard set of common fee descriptors, and the development of a fee setting framework.

The fee setting framework will provide guidance on how to set appropriate fees that meet statutory obligations, and information on how other projects being undertaken by the department, such as implementation of a common chart of accounts, relate to the development of fees.

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.

Abstracts of accounts

Requests for abstracts of accounts for the 2006-2007 financial year have been sent out to trusts. Please note that all trusts with investments or earnings above \$25,000 must have their accounts independently audited.

Completed abstracts of accounts were due to be returned to the program by 1 September 2007. Any trust that has not already done so should ensure their abstract is completed and returned to the program as soon as possible.

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.

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests

Last year the Department of Justice (DOJ) advised that it is a legislative requirement for all trusts to provide details to DOJ about any FOI requests received during the financial year (excluding requests for cemetery records under Part 4 of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003*).

An officer from DOJ will again be contacting trust secretaries in September to determine whether the trust has received any FOI requests during the reporting period.

Any trust that confirms they have received an FOI request will be sent an *FOI Annual Report Return* form. This form should be completed and returned to DOJ within 14 days.

All trust FOI information will be consolidated in the FOI Annual Report to be tabled in Parliament.

If you have any questions in relation to this matter please contact DOJ on telephone (03) 8684 0070.

Cemetery trust manual

The revised *Cemetery Trust Manual* which incorporates the provisions of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* will be available for download from the program's website by the middle of September.

Policy updates

Trusts will now be advised of key policy updates via a standard policy update notification.

The first update relates to documentation requirements for the cremation of exhumed remains. This update has been distributed to funeral directors and all trusts that operate crematoria, and is available on the program's website.

New standard form

The program in conjunction with the Cemeteries and Crematoria Association of Victoria (CCAV) has developed a standard *Application to Establish or Alter Memorials* form.

This form is fully interactive and is available on the CCAV website at: www.ccav.org.au/ under the heading 'The Association'. The form is available for download and use by all trusts, and can be accessed by both CCAV members and non-members.

Staff

As most trusts will be aware, over the past few months there have been a number of staff changes within the program. Current staff contact details are provided on the following page.

Cemeteries and Crematoria Program contact information

Phone: 1800 034 280
Fax: 9096 9186
Web: 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).

Staff Contact Details

| Name | Position | Contact in relation to | Telephone No |
|---|--|--|--------------|
| Carol Buttigieg | Acting Manager Cemeteries and Crematoria Program | | 9096 0358 |
| Megan O'Keefe | Project Officer | Abstract of accounts Exhumations Repatriations overseas | 9096 0355 |
| Jessica Marshall and Fiona Pittman (jobshare) | Project Officers | Abstract of accounts Cemetery trust fees Trust member applications and resignations | 9096 5159 |
| Helen J Brain | Project Officer | Burials in private cemeteries Exhumations Maintenance grants Repatriations overseas Trust advertisements | 9096 5160 |