

# The importance of permits 2017 CCAWA Seminar

Charles Watson

Department of Health WA

# **The Cremations Act 1929**

- Basic purpose is to prevent the destruction of forensic evidence!
- Forms 1- 5 concerned with setting up and running a crematorium

# Cremation - important documents

- The Health Dept Cremation Audit checklist
- The AFDA infection control guidelines
- New Health Dept website  
<http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Health-for/Industry-trade-and-business/End-of-life>

# HDWA – ‘End of life’

- Guidelines for the preparation of the deceased for burial or cremation
- Cremation regulations in WA
- Cremation approval process and prescribed forms
- Medical referees
- Risk assessment of implants and/or injections
- Repatriation certificate for ashes letter

# The process of getting approval for cremation

- Form 6 – application for permit to cremate
- Form 7 – Medical certificate
- Form 9 – Permit to cremated issued by a medical referee

# **Form 6**

## **Application for Permit to Cremate**

- “Administrator” - Includes the executor and any person, who by right of law or practice, has the right to apply for administration, and any person having the lawful custody of the body of a deceased person.
- Nearest surviving relative – Order of authority: Spouse, De facto partner, Son or Daughter over 18 years, Parent, Brother or Sister over 18 years

# **Form 7**

## **Certificate of a Medical Practitioner**

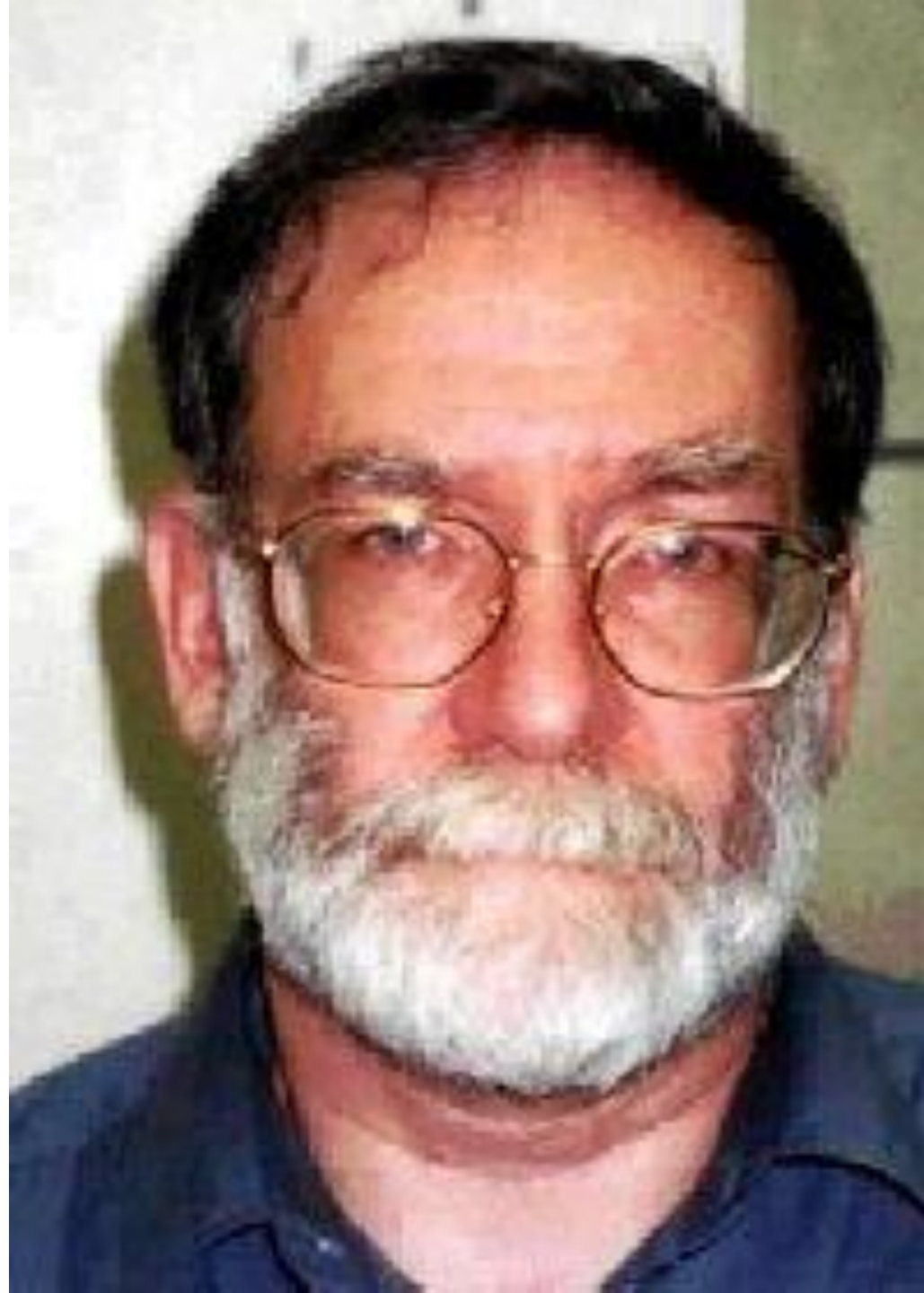
- To be provided by a medical practitioner who attended the deceased person prior to death
- Details include: History of patient prior to death
- Any suspicious circumstances
- Safety of cremation (pacemakers, radiochemicals)
- No conflict of interest

# Form 9 – the Permit to Cremate

- Appointment of medical referees – currently by the Governor in Council
- Application for a permit to cremate – administrator, person acting on behalf of administrator with written authority, another person with good reason (needs a stat dec)
- Form 9 must not be altered in any way by anyone other than the Medical Referee!!!



# Why is Form 9 so important?



# Dr Shipman

- **Harold Frederick Shipman** was a British GP who is the most prolific serial killer in recorded history.
- On 31 January 2000, a jury found Shipman guilty of 15 murders, but an inquiry after his conviction confirmed he was responsible for at least 218. Some believe the number is higher than 400.
- He was sentenced life imprisonment and the judge recommended that he never be released. He committed suicide in 2004

# Steps taken to prevent another case like this

- Six doctors were charged over permits to cremate
- Need for a third doctor to sign in the UK
- Monitoring of death rates
- Review of opiate use in palliation

# Current issues in WA

- Combining the Cemeteries and Cremations Acts – probably not going to happen
- Alteration of Form 9 by a third party
- Keeping a body at home
- Repatriation of bodies and ashes

