



METROPOLITAN  
CEMETERIES BOARD

# CREMATORS: WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY FROM THE BEGINNING TO END

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(for Richard Harvey, Facultative Technologies Ltd)

# agenda

- the cremation process
- what can go into the coffin
- what impacts the time it takes to cremate
- what do the families get back after cremation
- metal recycling
- cultural considerations
- safety considerations

# cremation process

- Coffin delivered to the Crematorium (via Funeral Director or cemetery staff or catafalque)
  - Crematorium staff confirm:
    - Identity of deceased and that the lead plate has been provided
    - The weight of the deceased and coffin
  - Prepares the internal Boarding Pass which accompanies the deceased's remains throughout the process
  - Removes any flowers or adornments from the coffin that cannot be cremated, removes metal handles and decorations from the coffin
  - Returns any tributes, name plate, adornments etc requested by the family through the Funeral Director
  - Stores deceased either on day racks or in the cool room to await cremation time
- Cremation staff prepares for cremation:
  - Enters deceased details into the FT Cremation software, specifically MCB assigned case number, surname, weight and gender
  - Initiates cremator to come up to temperature in the main chamber
  - Deceased committed into the main chamber of the cremator and cremation commences, cremation charging time is recorded in the system
  - Cremator operator monitors progress of the cremation and makes any manual adjustments required to facilitate efficient cremation of the deceased

# cremation process cont.

- Cremation completed, cremator operator:
  - Respectfully rakes the cremated remains into ash pit and records cremation time in the system
  - Cremated remains continue to breakdown and process further as they cool in the ash pit whilst another deceased's cremation commences in the main chamber
- Cremated remains are transfer to the ash pan:
  - Cremator operator opens the slot between the secondary chamber and the ash pan to allow the deceased's cremated remains to fall into the ash pan
  - Cremated remains remain in the ash pan for approximately 1 hour to fully cool
- Cremated remains prepared for return to the family:
  - Cremator operator removes any metal objects (medical implants, bra underwire etc)
  - Cremated remains are placed in the ash processing unit where they are broken down and transferred into standard plastic urn



# coffin construction

- constructed primarily of timber and/or wood derivatives
- constructed of combustible materials
- coffins constructed of metal or having a metal internal liner, or other metal insert, are not acceptable for cremation



what can go  
into a  
cremator  
with the  
deceased?

- Australasian Cemeteries and Crematoria Association's Contents of Coffins Delivered for Cremation
- coffin lining, sheets, pillows, mattress or body wraps / bags providing that they **do not** contain PVC or latex and there are no innersprings to the mattress
- clothing and footwear provided it is not wholly or principally made from latex, rubber or plastics
- embalming or temporary preservation fluid, radioactive injectable solutions, metal joints/pins/plates, silicon implants, false teeth and dental implants
- single book of max size 200mm x 125mm x 40mm

# what can't go into a cremator with the deceased?

- PVC, latex and rubber products, clothing and footwear
- cardiac defibrillator and pacemaker battery powered
- drug infusion pump and irradiated metal pellets
- alcohol, fluid in any container, glass
- metal walking stick
- framed photographs (metal frame and glass)
- any items comprised entirely of readily combustible materials and batteries
- medical pathological waste
- any animal or bird or cremated remains thereof
- innerspring mattress and metal bed frames

potentially  
acceptable  
items to go  
into a  
cremator  
with the  
deceased?

- spectacles and jewellery – not recommended but acceptable
- handbags – not recommended but acceptable if not made from PVC, latex or rubber
- handbag content – not recommended but acceptable depending on materials so check with Crematorium
- prosthetic limbs and plaster casts – not recommended, check with the Crematorium as those with high metal content will be refused



# how much time does a cremation take?

- cremation time is approximately 1 minute per kilogram of weight (av approx. 70 minutes)
- larger bodies take longer to cremate due to body density
- older deceased take longer to cremate due to a lack of body fat and healthy tissue
- males may take longer to cremate due to (typically) lower fat to muscle ratio
- deceased treated for cancer require longer cremation time due to treated cancer cells not being as combustible
- burn victims generally take longer to cremate due to fuel having been consumed in their burn incident



# cremated remains

- finely ground ashes are returned to the family in an appropriately sized urn(s)
- combination of cremated remains and the residual of the coffin they arrived in
- ashes are generally grey in colour but jarrah and solid wood coffins can produce excess carbon resulting in darker coloured ashes
- the lead plate is included in the ash urn
- bone density, body size and coffin type impacts on the amount of cremated remains returned and weight of the coffin



# recycling

- post cremation surgical and precious metals are separated from cremated remains and recycled
- recycling program is an opt-out program
- money raised donated to Cancer Council WA to support Crawford and Milroy Lodges
- to date MCB has donated over \$2M from our recycling program

# cultural considerations



Some cultures wish to be involved in the processing of cremated remains or wish to have less processed remains supplied



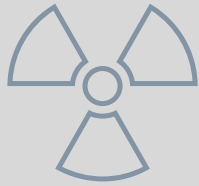
Increasing interest in holding memorial service / celebration of life at the time of the cremation;

Interest in being present for the charging of the cremator



Traditional practices with regards to the lighting of the cremation fire – incorporating this into crematorium practices

# safety considerations



Radioactive deceased – retained at Department of Health until safe for release to Funeral Director  
Post cremation, ashes may need to be stored in metal container for an extra period to ensure the levels of radioactivity have dropped to a safe level to release to the family



Risk of explosion if unacceptable items are included in the coffin  
Could damage the cremator, interrupt cremation process, release pollutants to the atmosphere, or injury staff



Requirement to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment from emission of harmful toxins





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# THANK YOU ANY QUESTIONS?

*Thank you to Chris Carter and Cameron Millar for assistance with this presentation*