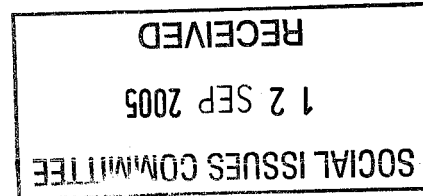


Ref: GM01194/05

Ms Susan Want
Acting Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

09 SEP 2005



Dear Ms Want

I refer to your recent letter regarding questions taken on notice by myself at the 8 August 2005 hearing of the Inquiry into the Funeral Industry.

Answers to the questions taken on notice are attached for your information.

If there is anything further that you would like to discuss please contact Ms Vicki Telfer, General Manager, Strategy and Policy Division by telephone on 4321 5468.

Yours sincerely



John Watson
General Manager – Occupational Health and Safety Division

WorkCover. **Watching out for you.**

Parliamentary Inquiry into the Funeral Industry

Questions on Notice

1. What are the occupational diseases that fall within the funeral industry statistics that you have given us?

WorkCover uses the Type of Occurrence Classification System (TOOCS) to code details of reported workers' compensation cases. One way in which cases are coded within this system is by the nature of the injury/disease. This classification is intended to identify the most serious injury or disease sustained or suffered by the worker.

The five diseases most frequently experienced by workers within the funeral industry since 1998/99 are identified in the tables below¹.

Most Commonly Occurring Occupational Disease Claims in the Funeral Industry – Number of Claims

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Mental disorders ²	6	2	2	3	3
Hernia	1	1	2	2	3
Diseases of muscle, tendons and other soft tissues	0	2	1	1	2
Deafness	0	1	3	1	0
Other diseases of skin and subcutaneous tissue	1	1	0	0	0

Most Commonly Occurring Occupational Disease Claims in the Funeral Industry – Incidence Rates (per \$Million Wages)

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Mental disorders	0.13	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05
Hernia	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.05
Disorders of muscle, tendons and other soft tissues ³	0.00	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.03
Deafness	0.00	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.00
Other diseases of skin and subcutaneous tissue	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00

¹ Source: WorkCover NSW. Please note that the data may be subject to change due to the progression of workers compensation claims over time.

² Examples of mental disorders included in this category are depression, anxiety/stress disorder and short-term shock.

³ Examples of diseases of muscles, tendon and related tissue include tendonitis, frozen shoulder and muscle/tendon strain.

2. Are there any occupational diseases from lists A or B of the Department of Health?

The diseases identified in Lists A and B from NSW Health are:

- List A: Creutzfeld-Jacob disease (CJD), Hepatitis C and HIV
- List B: Diphtheria, plague, respiratory anthrax, small pox, tuberculosis and any haemorrhagic fever.

Three of the diseases listed can be identified within the TOOCS classification system they are: HIV, Hepatitis and respiratory anthrax. During the period 1998 to 2003 there were no compensable cases of these diseases occurring within the funeral industry.

3. Did the original cardboard coffin not meet that standard, or was it not tested?

In 2004, Apogee International Pty Ltd contracted TestSafe Australia to test one particular type of cardboard coffin. No other cardboard coffins have been submitted to TestSafe for examination to date. This testing was conducted on a fee for service basis. Consequently, results of these tests are considered commercial in confidence.