

Submission
No 5

INQUIRY INTO FUNERAL INDUSTRY

Organisation:

Name: Suppressed

Telephone:

Date Received: 14/04/2005

Theme:

Summary

Partially Confidential

COPY

Mr. Arthur Chesterfield - Evans MP
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

Dear Mr Chesterfield - Evans,

I understand from an ABC Radio item that you're inquiring into funeral costs - a matter certainly, in my view, in need of investigation.

I enclose for your possible interest copies of documents relating to the funeral of my mother, in 1997. My comments follow.

If you see fit to use any of this material I would be grateful if you would let the source remain confidential.

The itemized details on document 1 include an "Estate Fee" of \$100, deductible if the account is paid within 21 days.

I suggest that "Estate Fee" is entirely specious and its sole purpose is to encourage early payment. This may be a legitimate ploy, but would be better if simply and honestly offered as, say, "discount for payment within 21 days."

As to the "Service Fee" of \$1,300! I find the special explanation (document 2) highly questionable. It refers to provision of "professional services", 24-hour service, etc, etc.

One would have thought that payment for ACTUAL costs incurred (+ profit + GST) would be the norm, and that all the items listed in 1 would be all that was required, and would be provided to a professional standard anyway.

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That being the case, I suggest that the \$1,300 "Service Fee" was quite uncalled for.

However, in this case, an extra "item" regarding transfer of the deceased from the funeral parlour to the crematorium, and appropriate staff attendance, would have been in order.

But, on the basis of cost for transfer of the deceased from the nursing home to the funeral parlour being \$185, I don't see that costs for the proposed extra item could amount to \$1,300!

The so-called explanation of the Service Fee is, in fact, a "sugar-coated" P.R. exercise, no doubt already necessitated by questions raised.

And, re the radio segment, I find it hard to believe the funeral industry's spokesman's claim that "cardboard" coffins are as dear as standard wooden ones. Mind you, they could be so represented if the funeral industry has the controlling interest.

It seems to me that the funeral industry people are still getting away with it. So, I wish you every success with your inquiries.

Yours sincerely,

on

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HEAD OFFICE, CHAPEL AND
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 P.O. BOX 34
 KATOOMBA NSW 2780
 PHONE: (047) 82 2922
 ALL HOURS
 FAX: (047) 82 4624

7th February, 1997

" Service without compromise "

014 /97

TO : FUNERAL EXPENSES FOR THE LATE

(DECEASED 31/1/97)

To our services rendered inclusive of:	
Transfer of patient per Mortuary Ambulance and two assistants from Lisieux Nursing Home Wentworth Falls to Blue Mountains Funerals, Katoomba -	\$ 185.00
Mortuary attention, hygienic preparation, partial preservation and dressing-	145.00
Medical Fees for issuance of cremation papers, Dr Singh \$60 & Mandatory Referee \$60 -	120.00
Crematorium Fees to Leura Memorial Gardens & Crematorium Pty. Ltd -	525.00
Furnish one fully mounted Embassy Maple Casket, with quality interior drapery, side sheetings, and engraved Nameplate -	695.00
Clergy Honorarium, Rev D White -	85.00
Floral Tribute from Fine Flowers, Katoomba (casket cover) -	80.00
Placement of Death and Funeral Notices, Sydney Morning Herald -	105.00
One Certified Copy of Death Certificate (on order) -	26.00
ESTATE FEE (MAY BE DEDUCTED IF PAID WITHIN 21 DAYS) -	100.00
Our Service Fees, as per attached Schedule, and Funeral Attendance at Leura Memorial Gardens Chapel including supply of Hearse and Staff on 1	<u>1,300.00</u>
ACCOUNT TOTAL:	\$ 3,366.00

E. & O.E.

Please note : Unless prior arrangements have been made, accounts are payable within 21 days from date of Service. Accounts not settled and/or submitted to Solicitors, Trustee Companies, Estates, etc., will bear an Estate Fee of \$100. However, if the account is paid within 21 days, the \$100 may be deducted.

D.W. TILDEN, J.P., AFAIM

D. W. TILDEN, JP, AFAIM, MANAGING DIRECTOR
 Member of The Funeral Directors' Association of NSW Limited
 Burial and Cremation Services conducted Locally, throughout the State, Interstate and Overseas

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In the course of the official inquiry into the Funeral Industry called for by a previous New South Wales State Government, one of the recommendations upheld by the Department of Consumer Affairs was a directorate that all Funeral Directors explain what is meant by "Service Fees" to members of the public. This allows us to point out that Service Fees are designed to help meet the costs associated with providing our extensive range of services, and are not a means of generating profit.

"Service Fees" are designed to provide for the professional services and facilities associated with our role as fully qualified and internationally accredited Funeral Directors.

These services include our availability at any time of the day or night, and the provision of trained personnel to assist you in making the necessary arrangements in your time of need. Over long years of service, and with extensive training, we have gained the expertise to liaise with Hospitals, Doctors, Nursing Homes and Clergy in an efficient and knowledgeable manner. We are also able to relate quickly and effectively to Government Departments, Crematoria, Cemeteries, and Newspaper publishers, in order to save you time, worry, and expense. We are legally required to provide the use of relevant facilities for dealing with a variety of circumstances, including a licensed mortuary and refrigeration facility which complies with regulations and standards set by the N.S.W. Department of Health, mortuary ambulance, hearses, air-conditioned mourning coaches, and other equipment peculiar to industry requirements. We employ caring, competent Staff persons, as governed by industrial awards. Finally, our "Service Fees" must also recoup a proportion of our administrative costs such as rates, taxation, vehicle expenses, telephone needs and essential services.

Our "Service Fees" are arrived at only after careful consideration of actual accounts, and are fully submitted to the Commissioner for Taxation in Company returns.

Based upon the number of Funeral Services effected by us annually, our current "Service Fee" is \$1,300.00 .

*Any other items connected with funeral services rendered and expenses paid on your behalf, such as initial transfer of the patient, appropriate mortuary attention, and similar variable costs, are **always** fully itemised on your specific account. We promise that there are no hidden costs involved. We thank you for the opportunity to clarify these matters with your particular account for services supplied. Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your arrangements.*

BLUE MOUNTAINS FUNERALS. KATOOMBA & SPRINGWOOD


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