

Submission
No 26

INQUIRY INTO FUNERAL INDUSTRY

Organisation:

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Theme:

Summary

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

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FUNERAL INDUSTRY INQUIRY

Dear Committee

I hope this letter reaches you in good health and i think an inquiry into the funeral industry is long overdue.

I worked in a well known Western Sydney crematorium for just over 4 years and i don't know what i have to say would fall within the terms of reference with this inquiry, it is a very long and emotional trauma but i would like to submit a short summary of it anyway.

I always thought multiple cremations were normal and I was shown how to put more than one body in the oven at a time and I did this for 4 years. Unbeknown to myself and others we were told over 4 years later not to say anything about what we were doing at the crematorium.

I was very angry about this and I was transferred to the cemetery where I was asked to sign a agreement to not disclose the company practices, I refused to sign it.

At the crematorium i worked at we use to cremate babies and children with adults, what ever ashes did not fit into the ash boxes would be dumped into garbage bins and then disposed of into graves which were already dug.

On may occasions and after putting the last body in the oven for cremation at the end of the day, if the oven was not hot enough to burn that body off overnight you would have to cremate the rest of it off the next day. Having to turn bodies in the ovens, the smell and watching them burn is not a pleasant experience especially when cremating children and babies and employers should be aware of how this would affect their employee's when they are cremating people.

I have kept something close to my chest for a very long time which in my opinion will prove theft and i will only let the appropriate authorities know this if their is ever an investigation. Workcover has been asked if they had conducted investigations in relation to this, but Workcover have ignored letters sent to them, maybe because workcover has a representative or

observer on the Funeral Industry Council and because of that situation it might be difficult for workcover to investigate.

I can show how this practice was done and where all the cremated remains were dumped into mass graves.

I have also been told that anything taken from the deceased irrespective of what and from whom is a criminal offence, and this was also happening.

Regardless of what i and others were doing at the crematorium, regardless of not being told this practice should not have been happening until 4 years later and beyond and shadow of doubt it was happening because i was doing it and it was happening years before i ever commenced employment with this employer and this is verified in a statement by another employee.

What gave these people the right to have me commit crimes, they have destroyed me emotionally, the torment, the nightmares, the guilt, my marriage ended in divorce and i have not seen my 6 year old daughter as a result of this, i am a tired and very worn out person, i cant even function in every day life and believe me i have been given my life sentence because i have to live with the depression and anxiety for the rest of my life.

What do i have to gain by lying about something of such a serious nature, nothing, the only thing i have to gain by telling the truth and it is the truth is maybe some justice, and as i have said before i have to live with it.

They had no right to do this to the public, they punished me and have left me to suffer both physically and psychologically all because i refused to sign a confidentiality agreement to not disclose what was happening at the crematorium and all for the sake of saving a few dollars in their operating costs.

I wish you all the best with this inquiry and thankyou for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Howell
24-5-05

