

To: Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW

From: Stuart Carter

Date: Thursday 28 July 2022

Subject: Submission to the Interment Industry Scheme 2022

## **Introduction**

This submission is primarily concerned with addressing two of the key points relating to this consultation: B and E, and contributing to associated concerns, primarily around being inclusive of related values and connections with ecosystem science.

B. Cemetery maintenance, and

E. Religious, cultural and spiritual principles: Respectful interment for all religions and cultures, including Aboriginal peoples, and to answer the question, as well as (from the discussion board) ...

Other factors: What other improvements should be made to how cemeteries and crematoria deliver services?

## **Background and context**

The backdrop within which the guidelines are written, needs to acknowledge the deep time practices of ancient (as distinct from primitive) cultures and big history understandings (as distinct from being entrapped in contemporary practices that overlook and downplay the relevance of social practices across recent generations).

Funerals and the disposal of human remains are essential services. They must not be constrained by commercial operators for purposes inconsistent with Earth law.

Those who have lived their entire lives following Permaculture Design principles for example, or other similar earth friendly ways as expounded by the likes of Costa Georgiadis, author of *Costas World*. These people are entitled, as a matter of course, to have options available to them consistent with these ways of living, which will be extension include body disposal consistent with their beliefs which may or may not align with the religious or cultural traditions of other members of our multicultural society. NOTE: Within this context for example, to pre-empt a point made below, shrouds should be viewed as not only having historical significance but align with circular economy principles and therefore a priority item to be viewed as normal and to be encouraged. This cohort of people, if given the opportunity, would be the basis for a supply – demand cycle, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to reducing GHG emissions at their ending of days events.

## **Submission proposals**

The context within which the guidelines are written, needs to:

- be as far reaching as possible – at least seven generations i.e. 150 years,
- be as closely aligned to cosmological / biological principles as possible, to be consistent with the nature of our physical being,
  - acknowledge the above, by not attempting to separate and fight the realities of who and what we are constituted from – the elements of the earth and the larger universe. Science tells us we are literally – not figuratively – cosmic dust particles, with origins dating back billions of years. As Carl Sagan has noted: We can't make an apple pie without first bringing into being a universe. It is that simple and that complex,
- break out of the myths constructed in times pre-current scientific knowledge,
- de-industrialise the process of return to the Earth - the atmosphere and hydrosphere.
  - normalise the above as givens within our scientific understanding of the cycles of life and death and the matters with which this inquiry is addressed.

- acknowledge the need to be carbon neutral in keeping with State and Federal government laws as they apply to the targets for 2030 and 2050.
- communicate the human bodies constituent parts as being carbon, water, air, and small amounts of other elements that do not require the intervention of carbon intensive industrial methods for its reintegration with nature.
  - Cremation = incineration (fossil fuels) = atmospheric pollution
  - Burial grave = excavation (fossil fuels) = atmospheric pollution
- prioritise the reclamation of body implants and industrial additions such as hip, knee and other surgical items, plus dental fillings that include the heavy metal mercury, therefore, promote choice by inclusion of less carbon intensive techniques:
  - Aquamation = alkaline hydrolysis
  - Natural reduction i.e. Terramation = composting
  - Solarisation = dehydration\*\*
    - leave a legacy consistent with being worthy ancestors – not hazardous wastes,
- promote, and make common, no coffins – therefore:
  - normalise shrouds and body wraps, including for example indigenous customs known as ‘without coffin’.
- frame the rules and regulations such that they can be adjusted in line with new and emerging knowledge and research, thus remaining consistent with earth law as it is understood over the coming decades. In other words:
  - not trap these guidelines within a timeline that is not in the interests of the earth and future generations.
- honour earth law and indigenous practise that was consistent with the other-than-human beings with which they / we share the Earth.
- follow the example of other-than-human beings that do not set aside separate landscapes for the interment of their carcasses, therefore over time dispense with cemeteries as we know them. Reframe the narrative, the story, to be one of returning to the Earth and the cosmos. Aquamation and Natural reduction methods permit this to be done.

While the funeral service as an activity / event of remembrance and celebration can be conducted anywhere or dispensed with entirely, body disposal must not be constrained by commercial practices that exclude the most basic and least earth damaging methods. Therefore:

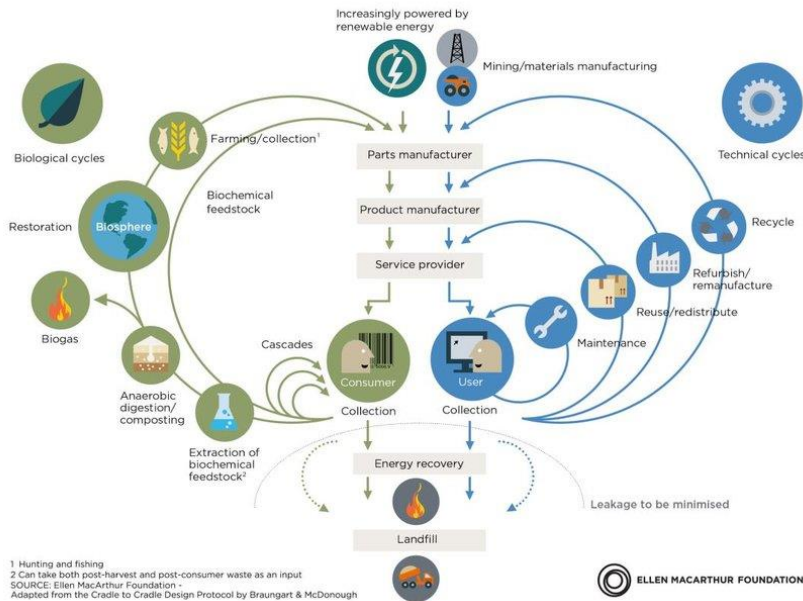
- Allowance for the placement of by-products of processes, such as for example aquamation, must be mandatory so as not to limit the availability of this disposal method to potential end-users/ customers,
  - Likewise, for other methods that may become available such as recomposition or natural reduction (body composting) remains.

An emerging response to contemporary problems created by the Linear Economy (take-make-waste) is a process that mimics the natural world. Known as the Circular Economy framework (regenerative by design), it requires that three principles be applied to every new product and service. The transition will take some time, but living on a finite Earth without transgressing planetary boundaries, leaves human society with little choice but to adopt circularity like never before. These three points are ...

1. waste be designed out of present and future products and services,
2. materials be kept in circulation as an extension of design,
3. earth systems are regenerated as part of circular economy practices.

Interment methods are ideally suited to the Circular Economy framework. It could be rightly claimed that in times past, they were the standard practice. Revisiting these ways would be beneficial and bring latent experience into the spotlight, permitting connections across generations and the rekindling of knowledge and skills.

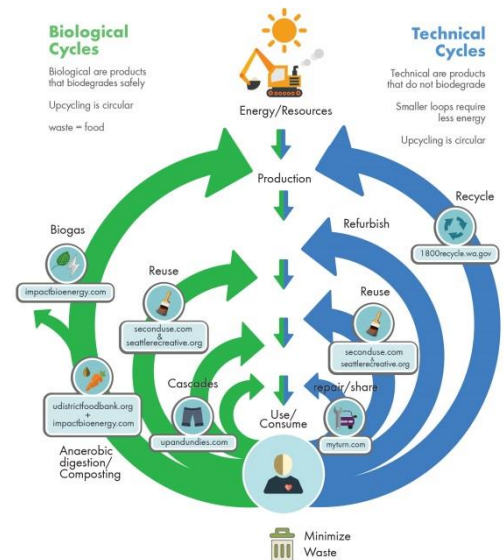
CIRCULAR ECONOMY - an industrial system that is restorative by design



The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is at the forefront of this transition, illustrating how it works using what has been termed the butterfly graphic ...

And a second illustration ...

We would encourage the Cemeteries and Crematoria review to consider how it can bring Circular Economy principles and practices into focus, providing a platform for discussion and ensuring that the guidelines remain relevant into the future. And be able to take account of what will increasingly become the norm across all sectors of society and industry, which under this framework, is required to act in support of social and ecological justice, and not the other way around.



This extract from CARBON: THE UNAUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY, helps to reinforce the necessity for many of the above points to be on the agenda.

Astrophysicist, Neil deGrasse Tyson

*"Maybe, when you go out and look up at the night sky, just imagine planets with life on them. Given all that carbon has going for it, that life is probably carbon based. And so rather than think of yourself as, gee, I'm not unique. No, say to yourself, gee, I'm a participant in a great unfolding story, a chemical story, a biological story where I have kinship across the cosmos. Because where ever I find life, it's going to have some carbon chemistry just the way I do. Why not use that fact, not to feel small, but instead to feel large and feel cosmically connected as never before."*

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this issue of community importance.

Stuart Carter – moderator Die-alogue Café ... <https://diealoguecafe.com/>

**NOTES:**

Cremation permits the reclaiming of surgical implants such as knees and hips, allowing them to be recycled but not reused due to the intense heat created in the furnace, and mercury is evaporated creating atmospheric pollution.

Burial does not permit the reclaiming of surgical implants for recycling or reuse, and mercury will inevitably leach into the water table and over eons make its way into waterways.

Aquamation and Natural Reduction permits the reclaiming of surgical implants and retrieval of mercury.

\*\*Solarisation = Sun exposure, not unlike air burial, as used by Pacific Islanders in times past, but not to be discounted simply because it has fallen out of favour and been overtaken by modern western practices. ..  
<https://australian.museum/about/history/exhibitions/death-the-last-taboo/disposing-of-the-dead-exposure/>

Kemps Creek Memorial Park – natural burial

<https://kempscreekcemetery.com.au/planningahead/sydney-natural-burial-park/>

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## Reference:

### Interment Industry Scheme review and consultation

Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW's (CCNSW) proposed Interment Industry Scheme is open for public comment until 31 July 2022.

To make sure people in NSW have access to clearly defined, respectful and affordable burial and cremation (interment) services, the NSW Government proposes to introduce licences for the interment industry.

Clearer industry standards, as outlined in the regulations, will benefit both consumers and operators.

Over the past 12 months CCNSW has consulted relevant consumer, community and faith groups, industry and government to develop the proposed Scheme.

Now CCNSW invites community, industry and other interested stakeholders to provide their feedback by uploading a written submission below.

Key points ...

- A. Consumer contracts
- B. Cemetery maintenance
- C. Pricing transparency
- D. Customer service
- E. Religious, cultural and spiritual principles
- F. Aboriginal cultural and spiritual principles