

Australasian Cemeteries and Crematoria Association

Guidelines for the Acceptance and Use of Coffins, Caskets and other Receptacles

Introduction

From time to time inquiries are received about the specifications for receptacles to be used for burial and/or cremation. These guidelines do not purport to be manufacturing specifications.

Their objective is to:

- diminish the likelihood of product failure
- reduce occupational health and safety risk to funeral staff during the conduct of a funeral service
- limit prospective psychological disimmunity during the conduct of the funeral
- provide an ongoing basis upon which AFDA Members may objectively decide whether or not to accepted a proposed receptacle

It is recommended that the following criteria be applied.

The receptacle must:

- contain a solid base made of wood, composite board or other equivalent suitable combustible material to facilitate storage and handling e.g. transfer between vehicles, upon roller trolleys, charge biers, placement on catafalques etc
- be impervious to rain
- be constructed in such a manner that:
 - distortion does not occur during handling or transportation
 - joints in the receptacle do not come apart
 - have a leak proof inner lining and be capable of being sealed with the coffin lid
 - when the receptacle is secured within the vehicle that the “coffin stop” or other engaged safety fixing mechanism does not collapse or bend or distort the receptacle
 - be able to withstand the rigours of being carried/handled by untrained persons e.g. mourners, during the normal conduct of the funeral
- have internal dimensions that exceed the measurements of the deceased
- have external dimensions limited to a size acceptable for burial/cremation

To diminish the likelihood of failure it is recommended that:

- the body of the deceased should only be transferred into the receptacle immediately prior to transportation for disposition or the conduct of the funeral
- floral tributes being placed upon the receptacle should be constructed in such a manner that their weight, moisture content etc do not diminish the performance of the receptacle top
- unless there is appropriate testing clarification to indicate that:
 - the receptacle has a higher load bearing capacity, then the total combined weight of the receptacle and its contents must not exceed 100kg
 - storage in cooled or refrigerated areas e.g. mortuaries or crematoria holding areas, does not diminish performance, the receptacle should not be stored in such areas

Receptacles supplied direct from a Manufacturer

To evaluate the suitability of a proposed receptacle and to minimise the likelihood of disruption to the actual conduct of the funeral and related inconvenience to the family, the funeral director should be aware that:

- Under the Trade Practices Act the manufacturer must be sure that goods:
 - are of merchantable quality—that is, goods need to reach a basic level of quality given the price of the goods and any description that is provided with the goods
 - are fit for the purpose or job that the consumer described to you or that are self-evident
 - match any description or sample given to the consumer whether in promotional material, over the phone, in person, on a website or on labelling or packaging
 - are free from defects and faults.

A funeral director should request that the manufacturer:

- provide certificates of currency for product liability and public liability.
- deliver the empty receptacle to its premises for inspection three (3) working day prior to the funeral service

In the event that the receptacle is deemed unacceptable by the funeral director or is not made available in a manner allowing suitable appraisal to occur, the funeral director need not accept it or should request:

- that the manufacturer, at their own expense, obtain certification from an accredited testing authority e.g. Testsafe Australia.

In the event that that certification is not obtained, the funeral director need not accept the receptacle.

Receptacles supplied by a client family

To evaluate the suitability of a proposed receptacle and to minimise the likelihood of disruption to the actual conduct of the funeral and related inconvenience to the family, the funeral director should request:

- that the empty receptacle to be delivered to its premises for inspection three (3) working days prior to the funeral service
- a proof of purchase be supplied which states the purchase date
- the client family to provide a statutory declaration as to where and how the receptacle was stored

In the event that the receptacle is deemed unacceptable by the funeral director or is not made available in a manner allowing suitable appraisal to occur, the funeral director need not accept it or should request:

- that the client family, at their own expense, obtain certification from an accredited testing authority e.g. Testsafe Australia.

In the event that certification is not obtained, the funeral director need not accept the receptacle.