



MEDIA RELEASE

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FUNERAL INQUIRY REPORT A POSITIVE FIRST STEP FOR CONSUMERS

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) and Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW Inc (CPSA) have cautiously welcomed today's report of the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the State's Funeral Industry.

"Some of the Inquiry's recommendations, if adopted by the NSW Government, will make an important first step in giving consumers of this essential services industry better protection and affordability," said both NCOSS Director, Gary Moore and CPSA General Manager, Megan Lee.

"This 9 month Inquiry has highlighted the efforts of the greedy large funeral operators to further entrench their control of the industry through further, spurious self regulation."

"The report clearly states that consumers deserve a far better deal when it comes to transparent pricing of funeral products, quality service and industry behaviour."

"However, the Inquiry's recommendations stop short of comprehensively upgrading consumer protection through the introduction of Government licensing and the establishment of an Industry Ombudsman Scheme," said Gary Moore.

"Whilst the Inquiry has stopped short of recommending these measures at this time, we note that it has recommended that a mandatory industry code of practice be established and that the NSW Government remove any legislative barriers to enforcing the code."

"We also note that the Inquiry recommends that the NSW Government, through its Office of Fair Trading, rather than the funeral industry itself through the Funeral Industry Council, should receive and act on consumer complaints."

"The recommendation that all operators in the funeral industry should publish a detailed breakdown of prices for consumers and that the operators should include a breakdown of prices for an essential services (basic) funeral are also steps in the right direction," added Ms Lee.

"However, NCOSS and CPSA would urge NSW Fair Trading Minister to consider establishing price benchmarks for a basic funeral in NSW so that low income consumers have a better chance of obtaining an affordable funeral product."

"We support the Inquiry's recommendation that could lead to lower price, quality coffins becoming available."

"However, we remain concerned that a poorly constructed industry code of practice could include anti competitive provisions, such as owning and/or operating a mortuary, which would make it difficult for small operators to function and hence reduce consumer options."

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