



Council of Social Service of New South Wales

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MEDIA RELEASE

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THE HUGE COST OF DYING

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) and the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association (CPSA) have called on NSW Health Minister, Morris Iemma, to reject attempts by a cartel of the largest funeral businesses to cynically control the State's funeral industry.

The NSW Funeral Industry Council, an industry body dominated by the Australia wide Invocare Ltd, has submitted a proposal to Minister Iemma, under the guise of removing so called "shonky" small operators, which would further reduce competition and drive prices for funerals in this State much higher.

"CPSA is the sole consumer organisation represented on the Funeral Industry Council," said NCOSS Director, Gary Moore.

"It has submitted a dissenting report to the Minister arguing that the Government must not give the Funeral Council the delegated authority to control the industry."

"CPSA believes that the Council's proposals may eliminate both unethical and credible small operators, remove competition, especially at the lower priced end of the market and solidify what is fast becoming a monopoly control situation for Invocare."

"If the largest funeral businesses have their way, State Government sanctioned cartels will operate not only in NSW, but across Australia."

"The cost of burial has nearly tripled in a decade, with the cost of a basic service now reaching \$7000. A recent study¹ suggested that these massive price hikes are probably a result of the increasing concentration of ownership in the Australian funeral industry."

"It is hard to imagine how much a family will be paying for a basic funeral in 5-10 years, if the big funeral businesses gain complete control of the industry."

"And, it is not hard to see, that with the proportion of people aged over 60 doubling by 2040, that profit margins of funeral operators are poised to become much more lucrative in the future."

Media Contact: Gary Moore, Director (02) 9211 2599 (wk)

¹"The Monopolisation of the Australian Funeral Industry" by Drew Cottle and Angela Keys. Drew Cottle, a senior lecturer in politics at the University of Western Sydney is available for comment on 9798 7987(h) or 4620 3161 (w)