



**left:** Metal implants **right:** Nails remaining

## RECYCLING OF METALS FOLLOWING CREMATION

### PUBLIC STATEMENT

At some time in our lives we may need to have an operation to replace a joint or have a metal insert to assist the repair of a bone. Often we will die with these metal implants still in our body and if cremated, these metal implants remain with the cremated remains following the cremation.

At present these unique metals, along with the remaining metals from the construction of the coffin, are removed from the remains and stored until there is a sufficient quantity to be taken out into the cemetery grounds and buried. The cremated remains, free from any metal substances are then placed in an urn, ready for memorialisation or collection by the family. Meanwhile we continue to dig raw materials out of the ground and damage the environment in the process of making new metal inserts. In addition the E.P.A. in Victoria indicate that these materials if separated from the human remains would be classed as Industrial Waste, and if burial of these continues, further tests would need to be conducted as the process of burying these metals may be illegal.

In a time when environmental issues are becoming more and more important to us all, we are realising that we cannot continue practices that are detrimental to our environment, without accepting the consequences of our actions sometime in the future.

After more than three years of investigations, the Cemeteries and Crematorium Association of Victoria (CCAV) has reviewed existing recycling practices with those that are currently available in other countries. Recycling of metals remaining after cremation is now fully accepted in over 15 countries across Europe including the U.K. and also in some states of the U.S.A. with over 450 Crematoria participating with a combined amount of around 200 tonnes of these metals being recycled.

Whilst recycling services are not available in Australia, OrthoMetals a company based in the Netherlands, through Austeng in Victoria, offers Victorian crematoria a full recycling service for collecting and dispatching these materials to the Netherlands for sorting and remelting these non-ferrous metals and the orthopaedic implants containing high quality metals of cobalt, tungsten, titanium and stainless steel that remain after a cremation and ensure that the use of non-renewable resources is minimised, thus helping protect our environment long term. Orthometals have been doing this for European based crematoriums for more than 14 years.

The Victoria Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulations 2005, Part 5, Regulation 19 "Disposal of substances", is very clear with the disposal of non-human material and reads: "A cemetery trust may dispose of any metal substance or non-human substance recovered from a cremator after the cremation of bodily remains or body parts in a crematorium at a public cemetery for which a cemetery trust is responsible pursuant to a cremation authorisation or a cremation approval, or in the case of body parts, pursuant to an authority under section 150 of the Act, in any manner it considers appropriate."

Arrangements are in place through the CCAV to ensure the highest standards of collection are maintained. This recycling project will be at no cost to the individual crematoria.

Please note that soft/precious metals melt during the cremation process and are dispersed throughout the remains and the cremator and are reduced to tiny granules. These cannot be recovered and returned to the family so it is recommended that all jewellery is removed prior to cremation.

The CCAV encourages participating crematoria to donate any monies returned, and assures families that any monies made available to the CCAV through this process will be donated to death related charities such as bereavement support groups, the Heart Foundation and Cancer Research etc.

*Should you have any questions about this recycling program, please contact the CCAV on 9863 6911.*