



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 19 November 2014

A NEW ERA FOR NSW CEMETERIES & CREMATORIA

Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson today said the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government's commitment to cemetery reform has been reaffirmed by the commencement of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* on 1 November 2014.

The Minister said the Act has allowed for the creation of Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW, which is now responsible for strategic and regulatory oversight of all cemeteries and crematoria in NSW, both public and private.

"This new body will be directed by an independent board, and I am delighted to today announce that former NSW Community Relations Commission Chair, Stepan Kerkyasharian AO, has been appointed as the inaugural Chair," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"Mr Kerkyasharian has unparalleled experience in community relations and multicultural affairs, reflecting this Government's commitment to positive change and inclusion.

"The board will set policies and future directions for all cemeteries and will have oversight of new and consistent rules for cemetery operators.

"One of the board's first priorities will be to identify future burial land to cater to the growing population of metropolitan Sydney to overcome diminishing land supply.

"The new Act also gives additional choice to consumers as to their preferred way to purchase burial rights and new guidelines will be developed by the board to assist this initiative.

"The Act strengthens the governance and transparency of the industry and brings more accountability to cemetery operations."

Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello said he warmly welcomed the appointment of Mr Kerkyasharian and the new board.

"This is an historic piece of reform which has been delivered in close consultation with leaders from across our major religious communities," Mr Dominello said.

"The new board brings a wealth of experience and will provide strategic direction to ensure our State is able to meet future demand for burial space and culturally-appropriate facilities."

Mr Kerkyasharian said his experience as head of the Community Relations Commission and commitment to multiculturalism will be invaluable to his role as Chair.

“I support the breadth and substance of the reforms that Minister Hodgkinson spearheaded and would particularly like to thank David Harley for his capacity and skill in establishing this new cemetery model,” Mr Kerkyasharian said.

“I am pleased that the new Act incorporates the dignity of burial for all and that religious customs and practices are recognised as sacrosanct.”

Ms Hodgkinson said the board is appointed for a four-year term and voting members includes;

- Chair **Dr Stepan Kerkyasharian AO**, with exceptional knowledge and expertise in stakeholder management and an extensive stakeholder network.
- Deputy Chair **Ms Abigail Goldberg** with extensive knowledge of the NSW planning system and corporate governance expertise.
- **Mr Scott Hawker** with exceptional financial acumen and understanding of risk and long-tail liability.
- **Mr Christopher Zinn**, with a proven track record as a consumer advocate and his knowledge of consumer behaviour and marketing strategy.

The board also includes six non-voting members representing relevant NSW Government agencies and a non-voting member representing local government as follows;

- Bill Gillooly – Local Government representative and former CEO Local Government NSW.
- Simon Manoski – Department of Planning and Environment
- Tracey Avery – Office of Environment and Heritage
- Rhys Bollen – NSW Fair trading
- Mark Matchett – Crown Lands Division
- Richard Broome – NSW Health
- Craig Sahlin – CEO Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW