



Association of Independent Funeral Professionals

Newsletter

June/July 2020

WELCOME TO A NEW FINANCIAL YEAR

Hello everyone,

It would be wonderful to say, with the move into a new financial year, that the worst of what 2020 can throw at us, is behind us. But the reality is we probably need to buckle in for a tough first quarter, possibly even first half of FY20/21.

The challenges have hit us on many fronts. For an industry that is all about connection and love, wearing masks certainly makes it harder to foster those feelings. But in the face of these obstacles, we have adapted, and none more than those of you here in our AIFP community.

To support you in continuing the transformation, on strengthening our network of incredible independent funeral professionals with whom you can work, we welcomed two new members to the fold these last few weeks. So we invite you to wander through the Newsletter to meet Lynette and Anne, who've kindly shared a little about themselves in our New Member Profile. And if you'd like to learn more about their services and how they can add value to your families, head to our Events section to sign up for next week's Ed Session.

Carly will be back with you as the opener for our Newsletter next issue, but she, and all the Board, thank you again for helping our community grow.

Alison, Communications Director (a poor but determined substitute for our passionate President)

BOARD NEWS

We've entered a new financial year since our last newsletter, thank you all for attending to your membership renewals.

Our numbers have declined slightly (and temporarily) with a few of our members needing to pause their membership due to financial hardship. We are always sad to lose members, never more so than in the current situation where so much of what is happening is out of our control.

As a Board, we will continue to focus on finding ways to strengthen our community and to add value to you. We will continue looking for ways to support you throughout this time and beyond. We appreciate any thoughts you may have on ways we can do this and would love to hear from members outside Victoria on ways we can grow our community across Australia.

Stay safe and look after yourselves.

BUSINESS FOCUS – FROM OUR VICE PRESIDENT

Customers, who needs them?

Well, obviously for any business to survive and thrive it needs customers. In times like the present it could be argued that customers are more valuable than ever before and usually are as we go through cycles of challenging economic times and competitors will come and go trying to take your market share.

It is for this reason I really encourage you to take some time to reflect on why your customers came to you in the first place; that is, what “values” do they recognise in you or your business? Once you understand that, you can put a simple strategy in place to focus your energy on building around your core elements (i.e. values).

At first you are unlikely to see any difference. However, over the course of two to three years your business will stand out versus the competition for the very “values” you’ve identified.

As an example, it could be as simple as identifying that customers came to you because they were referred to you. But that alone is not enough. What you really need to understand is “why” they were referred to you in the first place. Was it your customer service? Was it trust? Was it your expertise?

In order to get to the bottom of this you may need to ask every customer that walks in the door or calls you how they came across you, and then ask again for their experience after using your services or products. You can then build a picture of what makes you different pretty quickly. From there, you can then start to put a plan in place to make even more effort in meeting those identified values.

Through this process you are likely to realise that whilst we all need customers, we don’t need “all” customers. What I mean by this is that it is impossible to be everything to everyone. I suggest that you have a long term plan to narrow your focus on the customers that value what you do.

You’ll eventually end up with a business that retains more customers long term, has a much higher referral rate, is more profitable, is more robust in challenging economic times and is more valuable.

Mike Smits, Vice President

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Website

We are all now getting used to our brand new aifp.org.au web site and some of its many features.

As an organisation it allows all our activities to be undertaken from one location which means efficiencies and consistency for us (the Board) and a quality delivery for our membership.

- We are committed to supporting the funeral industry as independent and allied professionals.
- To help, network, update and support each other which in turn will make a success of your business.
- Moreover, we are committed to providing open and transparent information to the general public about all things death, dying and funerals.
- And to showcase our members as professional and responsible businesses.
- Please take a look at our new website for more information about the organisation. www.aifp.org.au

- Having another voice to speak on your behalf and ears to listen to you, we will uncover new solutions to deliver services to our families.

As a member you will have received a login to the system to access your own record so that you can check and update the information including adding photo image and logo.

All of our events, news and newsletters emanate from this one place so it's easy to keep in touch.

If you need help or assistance, we will give you support either via email or via phone if it is urgent. Just email membership@aifp.org.au with your question.

And this is not the end of it all, we are continuing to work on the website in the information we provide, in the services we deliver and the extending our reach on the internet.

Help Us Grow Our Community!

This is a call out to all members and prospective members to be involved as:

- State based Member Reps; and/or
- Sub-committee Members (*membership and annual industry event*).

In the spirit of *many hands make light work* and *contributing what you can* your involvement in the AIFP can be designed to match the association's needs and your skill sets, interests and availability.

If you are interested in exploring what's possible please contact **Carly Dalton**, President, to discuss what opportunities exist! president@aifp.org.au 0419 584 424

Member Profile

New Member Profile - Meet Lynette Barlow

She's the Founder of KEEPAR

How long have you been a member of the AIFP?

I am a very new member... 2 months.

How long have you been in the funeral industry?

Again I am a bit of a newbie... 2 years.

What did you do before?

Before joining the Funeral Industry I had spent my career working in the world of tech in the Professional Services sector. Most recently I was engaging with lawyers to upgrade their software to increase business efficiencies. Regional law firms was a huge focus for me.

Why did you enter funeral services?

In early 2018, I was responsible for organising my sister's funeral... something I had never done before. At the end of the service I was handed a DVD & USB with the Funeral Service Memories. I didn't own a DVD player and I didn't have my laptop with me. During the wake I had people who had flown interstate and from overseas asking me for copies of the Photo Tribute. I couldn't believe that in the year 2018, I was unable to access those memories on my mobile device and easily share them with anyone, anywhere in the world. I knew there was technology that could do this... that is how we founded KEEPAR. My sister Sally is the real person I have to thank for this amazing path KEEPAR is now following.



What's been the most interesting experience you've had in the industry?

Honestly, I have met some amazing people. Having dealt with lawyers for a long time, the change in client for me has been a breath of fresh air. The Funeral Industry is filled with passionate, caring, engaging individuals who are still very driven and commercially focused. The entire landscape of the industry has been interesting to understand as well.

What's one thing you'd like fellow members to know about you?

I studied IT at university and out of 300 students, I was one of five females. This was in 1997.

What's one thing you'd like to see done differently when it comes funerals and death care?

My overall background in business development or in other words SALES. The competition funeral homes face is no different to any other industries. Funeral homes needs to understand their differentiator in the market and discover how to communicate that to their potential clients. Technology is a vehicle to help show your difference.

New Member Profile - Meet Anne Astorino

She's the driver of Ethical Dreamtime

How long have you been a member of the AIFP? 5 minutes

How long have you been in the funeral industry? 10 minutes – except I designed our caskets many years ago.

What did you do before? I have always been a designer (interior and industrial); and my primary business is the importation of bamboo plywood- so, there's no before – but rather, 'as well as'.

Why did you enter funeral services? When I took a look around the cemetery and could see the graves were lined in concrete, and the caskets were made from MDF, heavy plastic, nylon, polyester and all sorts of other landfill, I was disgusted. To say nothing of the traditional dark polished, wood look coffin and casket selection, which I don't find very attractive.

What's been the most interesting experience you've had in the industry? The discovery that the 'business as usual' burial is not good for the Earth. Nor is cremation for that matter – all toxic.

What's one thing you'd like fellow members to know about you? I'm not religious at all, yet I certainly believe in the universal subconscious mind.

What's one thing you'd like to see done differently when it comes funerals and death care? Less toxicity. In every aspect.



COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Promote Your Membership - be AIFP Proud!!

We are proud of our Association – and we hope you guys are too! And what better way to show that than using our very cool Membership logo on your website and promotional materials.

We encourage you to promote your membership, to use the logo. [Click here](#) to access the various digital logo files and read through our usage policy. You'll need to be logged in as a member to see the information.

If you have any questions about how / when / where to use the logo, please don't hesitate to shoot us an email at <mailto:comms@aifp.org.au>.

Contribute to the AIFP Newsletter

There are so many people doing such great things in death education and death care that we are sure there are many articles just waiting to be written and shared. They might be articles you publish through your work in the industry or articles that you would recommend as great reading... or it might be a review of books or podcasts that you think are worth sharing.

We'd love to hear from you!

If you'd like to submit an article for our Newsletter. Please email your ideas or article to Alison Saunders, Communications Director comms@aifp.org.au for consideration.

EVENTS

With the Coronavirus still impacting in person gatherings the AIFP has cancelled our Christmas in July event and delayed our conference.

Currently we are exploring ways of delivering an online offering that can provide public education and industry information on the ways families can celebrate a life and mourn a death in ways that make the most of technology and how industry and allied service providers can offer more in an environment that has significantly changed and may remain that way for the foreseeable future...

If you are interested in delivering an online presentation that could support families to rethink their options for celebrating a life or be educated about new services and products available to them please contact Jacqui Chaplin, Events Director at events@aifp.org.au

Similarly, if you are a product or service provider to the death and funeral care industry and have ways that can support other industry and allied professionals to more effectively support families moving forward Jacqui would also like to hear from you.

The current thinking is that over a 7 day period later in the year the AIFP will hold a series of online presentations and forums delivering education and information to families and service or product providers alike... all from the comfort of their home, your home or your office!

You are welcome to email submissions for topics and conversations to Jacqui at events@aifp.org.au

In the meantime our bi-monthly online Ed Sessions from 7-8.30pm on the first Wednesday of the even months will continue.

Our last networking session was well attended and we look forward to being a part of your world face to face again in September.

'Ed Sessions'

Next Up... 7pm, Wednesday 5 August 2020

In our next Ed Session Lynette Barlow from Keeper and Anne Astorino from Ethical Dreamtime Urns and Coffins will be educating us on their offerings.

Keeper is an online memorialisation platform and Ethical Dreamtime has a range of ethically produced urns and coffins with a difference! You can read a little about these women in their "New Member

Profiles” above, but even better, register yourself for this session by midnight on 4 August 2020 and hear directly from them.

Bookings can be made for the August 5 Ed Session [via our online portal](#).

Member participation is complimentary.

Non-members can secure a spot at \$15 per person.

We hope to see you there!

Online Networking | Members Only Event

What’s hot? What’s not? Who’s who? What are you doing?

The AIFP online networking conversations are our “members only” online gathering, where we can talk all things end of life, death care and funerals. You can attend from the comfort of your own home, with a glass of your favourite beverage (whatever that might be), all you need is Zoom.

Held bi-monthly, our next session will be held at 7pm on 2 September 2020.

Click [here](#) to head to the website and register - those registered will be sent the link to access the Zoom Meeting.

All Things Death and Dying Expo 2021

Status quo...

The ongoing COVID-19 uncertainty has us all in a state of flux. We are still hopeful that March 2021 will see our next event but stay tuned for updates!

UPDATES AND REMINDERS

Refer, refer, refer – we want new members!!

The best way to grow our community is for you, our members, to talk to your colleagues and partners, the businesses you know and respect and tell them about us, encourage them to join, and we can continue to grow our Association.

All successful memberships to the Association are individual memberships at a flat rate per person of \$150 per annum, payable each year on July 1st. Members joining outside of that time period will have their dues calculated pro rata.

If you have anyone interested in joining, please send them our way. Go to our [home page](#) to find the appropriate Membership Application form.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions, suggestions, ideas or input please let us know via email.

president@aifp.org.au

PO Box 3252, Murrumbena VIC 3163

+61 (0)3 9569 0534

Contact us via: <http://aifp.org.au/contact-us/>

<http://aifp.org.au/>