

The green market and the

by Julian Atkinson - member of the NAFD Environmental Advisory Group



The developed world relies on the flow of commerce to function and develop and the sale of goods has a direct impact on the environment, so surely it is only right to ask, for instance, how those goods were made? Were they made with sustainable produce, what is their carbon footprint, what will be the impact of their disposal and could they be recycled?

I consider that a key catalyst for change is "increased awareness", partly through publicising the consequences of environmental mismanagement, error and exploitation and via climate change events such as the recent flooding in Australia. However, as a developed society our wealth is generated by trading, consuming and offering services to one another, and most will be happy to continue in

this manner. But there are a growing proportion who are asking how their goods are made and their impact on one another and on society. These people represent the "green market" we keep hearing so much about. When J C Atkinson commissioned FMC to conduct research, interestingly 60% of those asked said they would like to consider having an environmentally friendly funeral. Some of these people are now starting to exercise their preferences and helping to change the manner and service the funeral trade is accustomed to offering.

Speaking for my own "coffin" sector, over the last ten years we have seen an increase in demand for new goods, offered, labelled and advertised as "GREEN", some of which are labelled this way because they look rustic or are handmade. This may be very appealing but, beyond this, they offer no detailed environmental credentials as to how they were manufactured.



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green “wash”

This begs the question as to how this growing demand could be better serviced and provided for. Obviously, if the consumer wishes to have a “Green” funeral at present, the classic route - if affordability allows - is to choose such a coffin and, perhaps, a woodland burial. However, with such a variety of different products and opinions I think we can provide better guidance and more independent research would help.

My own role, and that of others on the Environmental Advisory Group (EAG), is to give guidance to the funeral trade in how best to respond to and engage with this change, be it by adopting some of the environmental advice, or by being in a better position to offer guidance and advice to your clients. The funeral profession has not always had the expertise to give an opinion, and it is our hope that, based on careful professional

research, the guidance we offer will assist. For instance, did you know that the majority of funeral-related carbon emissions are in the process of burial and cremation. Of the two, cremation is a more favourable “eco” option than that of conventional burial!

FAQ: HOW CAN I RECYCLE MORE WASTE?’

By nominating a member of staff to take ownership of all ‘green’ matters, you will ensure that environmental issues are being considered and dealt with in the correct and most cost effective way for your business. They can check where the goods you purchase come from and whether they are made from recycled materials and, if appropriate, compare them with the cost of alternatives.

Avoid overestimating orders and keep scrap paper in an area where everyone can find it and use it. If you’re looking to recycle paper, consider whether you need a shredding service for confidential documents. Find out what kinds of waste your company produces and what recycling arrangements are already in place. Look for opportunities to recycle more and check with your waste collection service whether you are getting the best deal. Some recycling companies (such as shredding services) will provide collection bins free of charge, others will provide outside bins for mixed waste.

Get everyone behind you by raising the issue at company meetings and make sure they all know about any new recycling facilities. Monitor the amount of waste that is recycled each month to establish savings and see where further steps could be taken.

The National Association of Funeral Directors’ Environmental Advisory Group will encourage and support members of the trade association in developing good practice within the funeral industry in matters relating to the environment.

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