



Speech by

**KEN TURNER**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Hansard 7 September 2000

#### **FUNERAL DIRECTORS**

**Mr TURNER** (Thuringowa—IND) (10.10 a.m.): In the last sitting of this Parliament I spoke about the undignified treatment by the Twin Cities Funerals staff of a deceased woman from the Masonic Village for the Aged whose body was indecently pushed and shoved to fit into their vehicle to be transported to the morgue.

Following intensive media coverage, I received a phone call from a woman whose 18-year old son had died in a motor accident in Canberra seven years ago. She arranged for his body to be brought home and went to see him for the last time at Twin Cities Funerals. She was directed to a tin shed with no floor covering, no airconditioning and the only furniture was an old chair. Her son's coffin was open and his body was uncovered. The horrific head injuries he had received from the accident were covered in flies and the manager had to use fly spray. This mother told me that this vision of her son would never go away. When she saw the recent television coverage, her anguish became irrepressible and she had to cry out for help.

Seven years ago this family wrote to my predecessor, Mr Ken McElligott, about the treatment by Twin Cities Funerals staff of her son's body. When Mr McElligott finally answered the letter, he told them that there was no legislation controlling the operation of funeral directors. Councils have no requirements with respect to their premises and, in effect, a person could operate a funeral parlour under his or her house. He went on to say that he would continue his attempts to have something done but that it would take time, if indeed it happened at all.

This was seven years ago. Indeed, nothing has happened. Legislation has not changed and Twin Cities Funerals is still operating in an indecent and offensive manner. I fear that this is the tip of the iceberg and that there are probably a lot more horror stories out there—horror stories that add to the grief families are already trying to deal with when they lose a loved one.

It is time that the Government looked at regulating the funeral business to protect the public from this kind of distasteful conduct. I table a copy of Mr McElligott's letter.

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