Model Building for Human Service Industries
with Application to the Australian Funeral Industry:
Development of an Accreditation Model for the
Funeral Industry in Victoria

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Michael King
B.A., M.B.A.

Graduate School of Business
RMIT University
August 2008
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Signed:

………………………………………………..  
Michael King  

29 August 2008
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank a number of people for their help, support and encouragement over the past six years. I extend my gratitude to the senior members of the funeral industry and health sector who participated in this research project. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, expertise and time. To my DBA colleagues at RMIT University, thank you for your intellectual stimulation, friendship and sense of humour.

To my supervisor, Dr Paul Gibson, thank you. To Dr Joanne Wilkinson, my industry mentor, for your support and encouragement. You were an inspiration to not only commence the program, but to complete it. My deepest thanks to my family for their love, understanding and patience. Thank you to Dr Guenter Plum for editorial assistance.

To my children Beth, Steve, Phil, Chelsea, Elly and Rob, I dedicate this thesis to you, as an encouragement to always persist. Finally, to Louise, my inspiration and soul-mate. Thank you for your never-ending support. I hope the sacrifices can benefit the community significantly. Thank you for just being you.
Contents

Declaration ........................................................................................................................................ ii
Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................... iii
Contents ........................................................................................................................................ iv
List of Figures ................................................................................................................................ vi
List of Tables ................................................................................................................................ vi
Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... 2

Chapter One Introduction ............................................................................................................. 3
1.1 Topic ....................................................................................................................................... 3
1.2 Objectives of the Research .................................................................................................... 3
1.3 Organisation of the Thesis ...................................................................................................... 4
1.4 Preliminary Issues .................................................................................................................. 5
1.4.1 The Researcher ................................................................................................................ 5
1.4.2 Management of Bias ........................................................................................................ 6
1.4.3 Ethical Considerations ..................................................................................................... 6
1.5 The Funeral Industry ............................................................................................................. 6
1.5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 6
1.5.2 General Historical Context ............................................................................................ 7
1.5.3 The Australian Funeral Industry .................................................................................... 7
1.5.4 The Changing Industry in Victoria ................................................................................ 9
1.6 The Emergence of the Quality Imperative ......................................................................... 10
1.6.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 10
1.6.2 Licensing ....................................................................................................................... 10
1.6.3 Accreditation .................................................................................................................. 15
1.7 Research Questions ............................................................................................................. 15
1.7.1 Research Methodology – An Overview ..................................................................... 16
1.8 Summary .............................................................................................................................. 18

Chapter Two Literature Review ................................................................................................. 19
2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 19
2.2 Accreditation ........................................................................................................................ 22
2.2.1 Concepts of Accreditation ............................................................................................ 22
2.2.2 Quality ........................................................................................................................... 25
2.3 Evaluation Frameworks ........................................................................................................ 29
2.3.1 Business Excellence Awards ......................................................................................... 29
2.3.2 The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) .................................................................................... 30
2.4 Drivers of Organisational Effectiveness ........................................................................... 31
2.4.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 31
2.4.2 Organisational Effectiveness ......................................................................................... 31
2.4.3 Performance Management ........................................................................................... 33
2.4.4 Longitudinal Perspectives on Organisational Performance ..................................... 35
2.5 Models ................................................................................................................................... 40
2.5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 40
2.5.2 Model Building .............................................................................................................. 40
2.6 Summary of the Literature Review ..................................................................................... 46

Chapter Three The Provisional Accreditation Model ................................................................ 48
3.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 48
3.2 The Development of a Conceptual Funeral Accreditation Model .................................... 49
3.2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 49
3.3 Overview of the Resources Applied in the Construction of the Provisional Model .......... 53
3.3.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 53
3.3.2 How the Provisional Model was Created and Refined .............................................. 53
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Overview of Literature Review ................................................................. 21
Figure 2.2: Egan’s Model (Egan, 1993, p. 129) .......................................................... 43
Figure 2.3: Kilmann’s Barriers to Success Model (Kilmann 1989, p. 30) ................. 45
Figure 3.1: How the Accreditation Model for the Funeral Industry was Constructed ... 52
Figure 3.2: Six Key Drivers that Contribute to Organisational Effectiveness .......... 63
Figure 3.3: Four-Tier Measurement Rating System – Across the six drivers of organisational effectiveness (i.e. 6x4) ................................................................. 67
Figure 3.4: The Four Funeral Industry Standards ..................................................... 70
Figure 3.5: 4x6x4 Accreditation Framework ............................................................ 75
Figure 4.1: Research Methodology ......................................................................... 87
Figure A1.1: Development of Accreditation Model ................................................. 179

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Summary of Responses of Senior Health Sector Officials ....................... 57
Table 3.2: Example of Health Sector Five-Tier Measurement Rating System (The ACHS EQUIP4 Accreditation Guide: 4th edn., 2006) ......................... 66
Table 4.1: Quality Criteria for Case Study Research Within the Realism Paradigm and Other Research Criteria (Adapted from Healy & Perry, 2000) .... 82
Table 5.1: Summary of Responses of Senior Members of the AFDA ...................... 101
Table 5.2: Summary of Expert Panel Group Interview Responses ......................... 103
Table 5.3: Summary of Expert Panel Individual Telephone Interview Responses ..... 108
Table 6.1: Recommendations for Future Directions ............................................... 142
Table A1.1: Funeral Industry Standards ................................................................. 177
Model Building for Human Service Industries with Application to the Australian Funeral Industry:

Development of an Accreditation Model for the Funeral Industry in Victoria
Abstract

Elegant models are a true representation of the reality for which they are designed. The efficacy and value of the model is a product both of the design process and the data that inform model construction.

This study describes the development of an accreditation model for the Funeral Industry in Victoria, Australia. The researcher is a professional with extensive experience and professional networks in the relevant field. In this investigation a case study approach is taken, using an insider view and an abductive strategy.

Drawing on the literature about organisational effectiveness, the real world of the funeral industry, experience of related human service industry and selected exemplars, a draft model is created. This model is reviewed and refined by professional peers through an iterative process that generates further meaningful data.

Data are analysed through a process of thematic analysis and interpreted using the perspectives of ‘mutual perceptions’, ‘symbolic meanings’ and ‘motives and rules’.

The study supports the development of a novated model and describes features of the context that may influence the model’s implementation.

Recommendations are made both for the industry and for further research.

The report highlights the utility of integrating management theory (i.e., organisational effectiveness) with ‘real-world’ experience in the design of an elegant accreditation model.
Chapter One

Introduction

Show me the manner in which a nation or country cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals.

William Gladstone, British Prime Minister (1809-1898)

1.1 Topic

The aim of this research project is to create an accreditation model (hereafter called the “provisional model”) for the Funeral Industry in Victoria, based on evidence derived from experts in the field and from the available literature. The thesis is divided into two sections, with its first part concerned with how the provisional model was developed and constructed, and the second part presenting the model (Appendix One).

1.2 Objectives of the Research

The main purpose of the research is to use an exploration of the literature on organisational effectiveness in conjunction with an exploration of the view of expert practitioners to inform the construction of an accreditation model. Central to pursuing that purpose is the development of clear, consistent and measurable standards that are relevant to the delivery of effective, high quality funeral service provision.

The research builds upon what is already known, by utilising the insights of industry experts and addressing gaps in current knowledge. A detailed literature review informs the construction of an accreditation model. The investigation demonstrates that it is possible to develop a robust accreditation model that employs instruments with the potential to effectively measure standards for the funeral industry. A constituent objective of the research project is to explore, describe, understand and investigate the major characteristics of the funeral industry, as perceived by an expert group of its representatives. This detailed understanding informs the refinement of a provisional model for funeral firms in Victoria.
The research literature identifies the key drivers that lead to organisational effectiveness. The researcher thereby discovers how organisational theory might underpin principles for the development of accreditation models.

For some time the researcher has been concerned about standards of business practice within the funeral industry. He believes that sound management systems can be developed, and improved by a consistent measurement of performance. An accreditation process has the potential to accelerate the transformation of best practice benchmarks and lift the standard of service within Victorian funeral firms. The development of an accreditation model through an evidence-based process would address this aim.

The researcher explores the health sector’s accreditation model to ascertain whether organisational theory has directly underpinned the construction of its accreditation process. If the researcher’s initial insights are well founded, the research project will highlight the need for industry-based accreditation models to be linked more directly to organisational theory, rather than standards being developed solely through participants’ experiences and shared knowledge.

1.3 Organisation of the Thesis

Chapter One, Introduction, provides an introduction to the funeral industry and the emergence of the quality imperative. The chapter discusses licensing and how it has accelerated the thinking of the funeral industry around standards and the construction of the provisional model. This chapter establishes the context and significance of the research project and its findings. The research question is stated and the research objectives, methodology and limitations of the research are detailed in Chapter One.

Chapter Two, Literature Review, has two purposes. The first is to survey the current state of knowledge concerning the factors which account for organisational effectiveness. The second purpose is to reach a position from which the researcher can construct a provisional model for the funeral industry, based upon the central concepts that are found in the literature. The literature review concludes with a framework of the key factors contributing to organisational effectiveness.

Chapter Three, The Provisional Accreditation Model, reviews the theoretical literature concerning how to construct accreditation models. Based upon the central concepts found in
the literature, the provisional model is then presented. It draws on exemplars and existing benchmarks, and utilises an iterative process from experts in the field to achieve model refinement.

Chapter Four, *Research Methodology*, explains the Realist paradigm as the philosophical premise of a research strategy, and the case study approach adopted for this particular research project, which involved a series of interviews with industry representatives. A summary of how the interviews were conducted and how the questions were developed from the literature is presented. The procedure for data generation and content analysis is described; also discussed are validity and reliability issues, researcher bias and ethical considerations.

Chapter Five, *Data Analysis*, outlines the analysis of the data in terms of the literature review and observations and comments from the experts within the Funeral Industry regarding Funeral Industry Practices and Accreditation. Interview data were analysed using an inductive strategy by developing a series of themes (i.e., perspectives / typologies). This analysis is highlighted by insider foci comprising these three perspectives (i.e., mutual perceptions, symbolic meanings and motives and rules selected from the research methodology).

Chapter Six, *Summary and Conclusion*, brings together and consolidates the key findings of the study from the literature, the expert funeral panel and the health sector in relation to the construction of the accreditation model. It discusses the limitations of the study and its contribution to knowledge, makes recommendations for further research, and confirms that the study’s core question has been thoroughly addressed.

### 1.4 Preliminary Issues

#### 1.4.1 The Researcher

The researcher has been involved in the funeral industry for over 25 years, and has held various posts with government and statutory authorities, within Victoria and overseas. He trained as a funeral director in London, before joining his father in a small family owned business in provincial Victoria. He has represented the funeral industry nationally, as Chairman of the Australian College of Funeral Service (ACFS), as well as representing the Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) on the National Skills Council. The researcher’s interest is in the development of standards and continuous improvement in the
quality of funeral service provision. The development of an accreditation model is consistent with these ideals.

It is the view of the researcher that this project makes a significant contribution to knowledge. The project identifies those characteristics and success factors that are important in measuring quality within the funeral industry and ensuring that requisite standards are being implemented across the industry.

1.4.2 Management of Bias

The researcher has attempted to minimise personal bias, although it cannot be eliminated entirely. Nevertheless, given that this thesis seeks to explore, describe, understand and investigate the major characteristics of the funeral industry, as understood by a group of its representatives, any minor personal bias should not detract from its significance (see Section 4.4.3).

1.4.3 Ethical Considerations

The names of the expert panel and the health sector respondents are given as pseudonyms in a manner that does not enable the participants to be identified. Background notes and relevant material will be stored in a safe and secure, locked area for a period of seven years and can then be destroyed according to Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines (Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007).

1.5 The Funeral Industry

1.5.1 Introduction

This section explains three crucial aspects of the funeral industry: the general historical context of the industry, the Australian funeral industry and the changing industry in Victoria.
1.5.2 General Historical Context

The historical context of the funeral industry needs to be examined before the issue of what should be included in an accreditation model can be explored further. This section details development of the funeral industry from the role of the undertaker that emerged in the 17th century to the development of the modern day funeral director in Victoria in 2008. This background to the funeral industry in Australia and the changing industry in Victoria indicates what progress has been made in the industry since the settlement of Victoria and Melbourne’s first funeral director in 1839 to the present day in 2008.

In the context of this history the likely consequences of the current Victorian Government Inquiry into Regulation of the Funeral Industry has accelerated industry thinking about accreditation. The licensing issue addresses the first step in the attempt to assure quality for the industry. Accreditation is the logical second step and an extension of the progress that is currently being made in raising standards within the industry.

1.5.3 The Australian Funeral Industry

The recent Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into regulation of the funeral industry states that the funeral industry is unique and complex. It is unique in that it endeavours to provide event management in a wide range of packages of goods and services at what can be an extreme time of sadness and stress for families. It is also complex in that the funeral industry faces a range of practical and emotional issues for the families involved in death and the people employed within the industry.

The AFDA submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Regulation of the Funeral Industry estimated that most families have direct contact with the funeral industry as consumers, only once in every 12 to 15 years. The funeral industry is also a business about which relatively little is known, due to a general community reluctance to address issues related to death and funerals. The modern commercial funeral director is in essence an event manager, who performs tasks such as transportation, preparation and storage of the body, preparation for and conduct of the funeral and some form of follow-up with the family after the funeral. The level of services purchased at the time of the death vary according to the wishes and financial situation of the family.
The role of the undertaker emerged in the 17th century to provide horse transportation and a coffin. This business arose from other occupations such as cabinet making and horse carriage businesses. Funeral firms were traditionally family owned and managed businesses. Griffin and Tobin (1997) state that Melbourne’s first undertaker was established in January 1839 in Collins Street, shortly after Melbourne was settled. During the 1800s in Victoria, most people died at home rather than in a hospital. The coffin was brought to the home, where the service was conducted and the coffin was conveyed by horse-drawn hearse to the cemetery.

Clark and Szmigin (2003), Burrell (1998), Parsons (1997), Cahill (1995) and Habenstein (1962) indicate that the funeral industry’s evolution in Australia from undertaker to funeral director has closely mirrored that of England and America. During the late 19th century, undertaker trade associations in all three countries were established to protect their member’s interests. In Victoria, the Master Undertakers Association was established in 1891, later to become the AFDA in 1935. This name change from ‘undertaker’ to ‘funeral director’ occurred in 1935 in both Australia and Britain. Parsons (1999) considered this change of name was an attempt to professionalise the industry in the eyes of the public.

According to Walker (1984), the role of the undertaker had, by the early 1900s, evolved into responsibilities such as providing mourning clothes and funeral attendants, thereby linking the funeral with a display of status and social acceptability. However, the undertaker was not the principal funeral organiser. Family and friends still took the major role in the preparation of the body at the home and the actual conduct of the funeral. The increasing use of motor vehicles following the First World War and the introduction of refrigeration also affected the social customs associated with funerals. According to Griffin and Tobin (1997), these social changes associated with the war saw the removal of death from the family home and into specialised places such as hospitals and ultimately funeral chapels.

In the 1930s, most funerals were still conducted from the home of the deceased or their relatives and very few funeral services were conducted from churches (Walker, 1984). The number of funeral firms operating between 1900 and 1950 in Melbourne was fairly stable at around thirty-seven.

After 1950, the industry came under the control of fewer firms as larger, more successful firms amalgamated. The large capital costs of establishing funeral firms created barriers of entry to the industry and according to Walker (1984) between 1950 and 1975 the number of funeral firms operating in Melbourne decreased from thirty-seven to twenty-eight. Of these firms, only eighteen were still operating in 1980 with just two new firms having entered the
market since 1975. In the 1980s two significant changes occurred in the industry: low cost funeral companies and the introduction of ‘female only’ funeral companies. During the 1990s, the structure of the funeral industry changed, with large overseas public companies acquiring many existing funeral firms.

1.5.4 The Changing Industry in Victoria

According to the research organisation IBISWORLD (2006), the funeral industry is small, with a turnover of $690 million, employs over seven thousand people and competes on the basis of service, although price and location are also important. The industry contributed an estimated $236 million to the Australian economy in 2005-06, which represented 0.26% of total GDP. The stable death rate and ease of entry for low-cost funeral providers has meant that in metropolitan and provincial areas of Victoria competition has increased dramatically. This is supported by the AFDA Victoria Division’s submission to the Inquiry in October 2004, which stated that in Melbourne since 1990:

- The collective market share of the four largest firms has reduced from 70% to 55%;
- Medium-sized firms have reduced from 20% to 10%;
- Smaller and newer firms have increased from 10% to 35%; and
- The total number of firms operating in Melbourne has tripled from 25 firms to 70 firms operating around 200 businesses.

The death rate is expected to increase from the year 2010 due to a shift in the age distribution as the first of the baby boomers reach the age of sixty. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population projections indicate that in 2021, 16.3% of the population will be aged between sixty-five and eighty-four years and a further 2.1% will be aged eighty-five years and over. By 2051, these proportions are expected to be 22% and 6% respectively. The funeral industry in Victoria has reflected this population growth and has grown from small family operated businesses into a multi-million dollar industry.

At present, however, the funeral industry is in a low growth phase, which has been compounded by a stagnant death rate. In Victoria, the ABS (2004) data indicate that the death rate has been in a steady decline for the past twenty years (9.5 per 1000 population in 1983 to 6.3 per 1000 population in 2003). Nevertheless, the number of deaths (29,365 in 1982 to
32,925 in 2003) has increased as a natural result of population increases and the ageing of the population. The median age of death has also increased in Victoria (79.7 years in 2003).

There are considerable differences in the size of funeral businesses and the number of funerals conducted by individual firms each year throughout Victoria. Small funeral businesses operate throughout rural and regional Victoria and conduct between twenty to one hundred funerals per year. Depending on their location and demographic factors, medium-sized funeral businesses can operate from several sites and range from two hundred to seven hundred funerals per annum, whereas the larger metropolitan companies conduct several thousand funerals per annum.

1.6 The Emergence of the Quality Imperative

1.6.1 Introduction

A global trend emerged in the late 1970s focussing on quality and quality drivers. These quality measures and the maturation of industries, ensured that the quality imperative was built into the fabric of organisations. This uptake by organisations reflected findings about the importance of quality and how it was measured across industries and individual firms.

The next section describes licensing, its background, the AFDA submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry and the findings of the Inquiry.

1.6.2 Licensing

A result of the Victorian Government Inquiry into regulation of the funeral industry is that the industry has been forced to develop a policy response to the issue of licensing. The AFDA formed a Licensing Committee of senior industry experts and the researcher’s role as a participant of this committee allowed him to:

- Leverage off the committee findings, and
- Utilise members as an expert reference group.

The issue of licensing has been helpful in that it has shaped and informed the thinking of senior members of the industry. This thinking is accelerating the development of accreditation as the logical second step for the industry. Licensing is the first step in the monitoring of the
provision of quality for the funeral industry in Victoria. Accreditation may extend the progress that is being made in this industry.

1.6.2.1 Background to Licensing in Victoria

This section summarises the background to licensing as the first step in the provision of quality for the funeral industry. It establishes the context of accreditation and how the provisional model was constructed on the basis of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

From 1935 to the 1990s the AFDA sought to secure registration / licensing of the funeral industry, together with a focus on education and qualifications to enter the industry. The AFDA sought regulation as part of its professional ideals to ensure that minimum acceptable standards would be introduced for funeral firms. The issue of licensing was raised again by the Victorian President of the AFDA in April 2003, seeking to obtain regulation of the funeral industry in Victoria. A meeting of all Victorian members of the AFDA was held on 9 August 2003 at Bendigo. The overwhelming feeling of the meeting was in favour of some type of regulation. As a result of this meeting a licensing sub-committee was formed by the AFDA and held its first meeting on 13 November 2003.

The meeting of the Licensing Committee decided that consumer research should be conducted to gauge the public’s views on funerals and licensing, as this empirical data would add validity to its submission to the inquiry and generate heightened community interest and participation. The objectives of the consumer research were to provide the AFDA with an understanding of the perceptions that the Victorian public has of funeral directors; the attitudes and expectations of Victorians to licensing of funeral directors; and to present a statistically reliable sample to support the AFDA position.

The sub-committee initially decided that any licensing system should:

- Require a minimum set of standards relating to transportation, storage and treatment of deceased persons;
- Lead to greater protection of the consumer and enhanced Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) standards for workers;
- Have a Government-enforced guarantee that deceased people will be cared for with dignity and respect.
The Chairman of the Committee was concerned that industry members did not understand the full range of issues involved, and consequently a Members’ Day was held on 21 May 2004. The purpose of the meeting was for AFDA members to articulate a clear position on licensing, with recommendations and suggestions to be incorporated within the submission to the Government Inquiry.

Four areas were discussed which shaped the AFDA position towards licensing:

1. Why licensing?
   Three main reasons emerged: protection of consumers, enhancement of consumer confidence and protection for funeral directors.

2. Who or what should be licensed?
   The licensing model should aim to achieve maximum compliance, while being conceptually and administratively simple and non-prescriptive.

3. What activities should licensing cover?
   It should cover three broad areas of activity: Human Resources, Environment and the Deceased.

4. How should licensing be enforced?

A Licensing Board should be created to oversee the scheme and this Board should be comprised of key stakeholders such as funeral directors, government and consumers. This Board should set policy related to licensing of funeral directors, conditions in which licences may be revoked and fines imposed. Inspections would need to be part of any enforcement regime.

The Members Day meeting indicated that licensing should be of a minimalist nature and that the Government should encourage licensing in order to give credibility to the scheme and enhance consumer confidence. A clear preference of the AFDA members present was to avoid prescriptive regulations that would inflate the cost of compliance for industry and consumers. It was considered that for the licensing scheme to be adopted it needed to have authority in terms of the ability to penalise those who violate its provisions, thereby increasing consumer confidence.

The guiding principles established by the Licensing Committee are accommodated within the provisional model, which is developed as part of this project. At the lowest levels of the measurement rating system, i.e., awareness or implementation, the provisional model acknowledges that firms cannot be accredited if they do not meet the requisite licensing
requirements. The funeral industry established these provisions as minimum standards of entry for funeral service providers within Victoria.

The guiding principles established by the meeting for submission to Government included:

- **Client protection:** It must be beneficial to the consumer/client;
- **Plausibility:** Sound arguments to avoid self-interest and subjectivity;
- **Minimalist:** It must focus on the few activities that really matter;
- **Scalability:** It must equally cater for small and large funeral directors;
- **Affordability:** The scheme must be economically viable and sustainable;
- **Consistency:** With current AFDA principles; and
- **Compliance:** With minimal overlap with existing state and federal legislation.

The exemplar of minimum standards of entry established for licensing within Victoria should be mirrored at the lower levels of measurement in the construction of the provisional model.

The funeral industry established these provisions as minimum standards of entry for funeral service providers within Victoria. Hence, the provisional model is constructed with the knowledge that firms cannot be accredited if they do not first meet the licensing requirements.

The minimum standards established for licensing within Victoria are later mirrored in this study at the lower levels of measurement in the construction of the provisional model.

The major deficiencies of a self-regulatory arrangement according to the AFDA were that:

- Not all funeral directors are members of industry associations and adherence to the association’s standards is voluntary;
- Standards differ among industry associations, so there is no overall consistent set of standards for the industry;
- The industry association has limited resources to monitor adherence; and
- There are no penalties for non-compliance.

The AFDA sought introduction of a legislative framework with two distinct components:

1. A licensing component that would require a funeral director to obtain a licence in order to operate, and
2. A regulatory component that would require the suspension or revocation of a firm’s licence.

The AFDA submission process involved interviewing 20% of the AFDA membership as well as conducting more than 575 phone interviews, detailing the respondents’ profile, past experience and perceptions of funeral directors in the areas of ethical standards, treatment of the deceased, OHS, fair trading, pricing, customer service and their attitude towards licensing. Responses to the phone interviews were tested against four key themes that had emerged from the members’ meeting. Respondents to the survey expressed a preference for a scheme that was mandatory and administered by a joint industry and government body. Despite concerns about the cost of funerals, 70% of the respondents stated they were willing to pay a small premium to support funding a licensing scheme. There was a consistency in the needs, attitudes and perceptions of country and city respondents, suggesting that the findings could be generalised across the community. Communication of any industry change was seen as critical by respondents who wanted information about funerals.

1.6.2.2 The Victorian AFDA Submission to the Inquiry

The AFDA, in its submission to the Inquiry, supported a mandatory but minimalist system of licensing and regulation. The AFDA indicated that areas such as advertising, OHS (with the exception of infection control), prepaid funerals and pricing practices should not be regulated at all. The organisation endeavoured to foster best practice by providing its members with guidelines and standards expressing the view that licensing ought to be consistent with the organisation’s mission and mandate.

The AFDA concluded that a Funeral Industry Council (FIC) should be established under either the Department of Consumer Affairs, or the Department of Human Services, for the purposes of: issuing licences; developing criteria and guidelines; overseeing and conducting audit/inspection systems; adjudicating complaints; and revoking, suspending and placing conditions on licences. The industry association suggested that the FIC should be comprised of representatives from the funeral industry, government, health experts and consumers. The role of the administration arm would be to oversee the licence component; conversely, the role of the enforcement arm would be to oversee the regulatory component.

In summary, in an industry where there are few complaints, self-regulation by industry associations was considered ineffectual. The AFDA’s submission focused on the importance
of community expectations about the body of the deceased being treated with dignity and respect. Whilst the AFDA supported competition, it argued that it could also be detrimental, as some firms due to economic pressures cut corners encouraging undesirable and unacceptable practices to emerge and prevail.

1.6.2.3 Findings of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Regulation of the Funeral Industry

An overview of this document (source, date) provided a summary of the emergence of industry associations, standards, consumerism and options for regulation. This parliamentary report provides a comprehensive report on the funeral industry in Victoria, but what is most significant is the omission of any reference to a need for an accreditation process.

1.6.3 Accreditation

The researchers own definition of accreditation used in this thesis and discussed in detail in Chapter Two is as follows:

A continuous voluntary process, whose purpose is to establish agreed industry standards, which aim to improve professionalism and quality, through better business practices and customer service. It is a peer driven performance management system evaluated periodically and audited by peers. It is a process through which organisations proceed in order to be officially recognised.

The funeral industry has not yet addressed the challenges of the accreditation process. This research project examines the accreditation challenge and has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the quality imperative. It is timely because of the licensing issue establishing base line standards.

1.7 Research Questions

The three primary objectives of this project are to ascertain:

1. What are the major characteristics and challenges that face funeral service providers that should drive an accreditation model for funeral firms in Victoria?
2. What are the major success factors in becoming and remaining organisationally effective?

3. How can these characteristics and factors be used to underpin the development of an accreditation model?

1.7.1 Research Methodology – An Overview

Chapter Four details the research design and provides a discussion of the research methodology that informed the research methods chosen to address the research questions. This project is predicated upon the adoption of the Realist Paradigm, which according to Stiles (2003) and May (1993) ontologically and epistemologically reflects the middle ground between Positivism and Interpretivism. The Realist Paradigm makes it imperative for the researcher to approach the organised world as it is understood and experienced by members of the funeral industry within Victoria. Realism encourages a methodological approach that favours mixed methods to construct validity, such as the use of prior theory, case study interviews and observation. Realist research seeks to integrate the subjective with the objective.

Structured conversations with the interviewees highlighted the status quo regarding perceptions about accreditation prior to the possible impetus generated by this project in Victoria. Specifically it was a strategy generated to collect another important layer of data about the industry.

In keeping with the research paradigm, this project began with a series of interviews with four senior industry representatives, about their understanding and feelings about accreditation. The purpose behind the interviews was to explore what the thinking of the funeral industry was at senior levels about accreditation prior to the construction of the accreditation model. These four representatives were not exposed to any licensing accreditation-related or model-building discussions in the research project prior to their interviews.

Each of the four informants from the Victorian Divisional Council of the AFDA was asked four questions:

- What is your understanding of what an accreditation model is?
- What do you think an accreditation model would look like?
- What areas should an accreditation model cover?
• How would an accreditation model work?

Each of the four informants agreed that accreditation meant the development of agreed standards that needed to be met in order to achieve professionalism and assist the general public to feel safe that standards were being consistently met by the industry. There was general consensus that the accreditation model needed to be fairly simple and understandable, but with specific expectations of what standards needed to be met. The current self-assessment process of the AFDA Premises Equipment and Vehicles Policy (PEV) was seen as suitable. Further to this, it was considered important to place a focus on staff training and qualifications.

All informants considered that the main area an accreditation model should cover is mortuary practices, as the hygienic and safe treatment of the deceased person was considered most important. Similarly, all informants, having discussed how an accreditation model would work, agreed that it should be compulsory for all firms regardless of size or location. It was also suggested that an external auditor was required to assess the process, and that education sessions would be required to explain how and why the process was being implemented. (See Table 5.2 for the data from the interviews.)

The four representatives disclosed their naivety about the accreditation process when the subject was brought up. The four questions posed to them generated responses that showed gaps in their knowledge, a lack of familiarity with the accreditation process and a disparity in their understanding of organisational theory. Lack of understanding is evident in their superficial comments. Gaps in understanding were evident in comments about maintaining the status quo and adherence to a simplistic model. The Australian ethic of equalitarianism was evident in their expression of the view that all firms regardless of size should be treated equally.

According to Blaikie (2003), an abductive strategy involves constructing theory that is grounded in everyday activities. The construction and design of the accreditation model is linked directly to the everyday activities funeral firms perform. The purpose of the research was to develop, evaluate and improve an accreditation model that should govern the major activities of the funeral industry. The abductive strategy contributes to addressing the first part of the research question and matches the approach of ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions posed by this research project.
This researcher utilised a case study approach which involved gathering detailed information, with a view to obtaining in-depth knowledge. Collis and Hussey (2003) state that exploratory research is used in areas where there are few theories or an evident body of knowledge and searches for causal tendencies that suggest caused relationships within limited contexts. The degree of fit of exploratory research to the funeral industry is high.

The provisional accreditation model has been developed on the basis of the literature review presented in Chapter Two. This review allowed the researcher, drawing on his experience as a funeral director, to arrive at an account of the current state of knowledge concerning factors which contribute to organisational effectiveness. The process of reviewing the literature supported the formulation of questions for the interview process.

The research design involved a multi-phased interview process with a variety of interviewees both internal and external to the funeral industry. The detailed descriptions of this interview process may be found in Chapter Four, which explores how resources were applied in the construction of the provisional model. Influences on the model, such as the literature, exemplars from the health sector and the funeral industry, as well as the researcher’s analytical skill set, are discussed in the construction of the provisional model.

### 1.8 Summary

The first chapter has outlined the context and origin of the research project, the organisation of the thesis and the emergence of the quality imperative. Accreditation has been identified as a logical step in the development of the funeral industry.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review has two purposes. The first purpose is to review the current state of knowledge concerning the factors which account for organisational effectiveness. The second purpose is to reach a position from which the researcher can construct a provisional accreditation model for the funeral industry. The literature review therefore concludes with a framework of the key factors contributing to organisational effectiveness that need to be taken into account in the development of the accreditation model (see Chapter Three).

The background to this project was described in Chapter One. This chapter presents a selection of the literature relating to the particular characteristics that make organisations effective over long periods of time. Six main characteristics emerge from the literature: leadership, human resources, quality, information systems, compliance, innovation and change. This complex of necessary characteristics highlights the challenges for industry leaders and the owners of funeral firms in Victoria as they attempt to respond to demands to operate effectively in the current Australian business environment.

Examination of the literature uncovers no accreditation model that has been developed specifically for the funeral industry. Emerging from the literature are principles in the form of a set of criteria which should guide the construction of any industry accreditation model. The literature indicates that there is a potential for these criteria to be applied in the construction of an original accreditation model for the funeral industry.

Figure 2.1 provides a visual representation of the literature review. It presents the six key characteristics that lead to organisational effectiveness, together with concepts about models and model building. The visual representation captures the importance of issues around quality and how they are measured in relation to the concept of accreditation. The process of continuous quality improvement (CQI) emerges as the dominant strategy for ensuring
accountability and basic quality, together with risk management, as fundamentals in the accreditation process.

Evaluation frameworks such as the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) and Business Excellence Awards are examined in this chapter to explore how standards and quality criteria can be measured and implemented for funeral organisations. Themes explored include standards, benchmarking and total quality management (TQM). The existing literature concerning organisational structures and theories is examined to determine which theory and structure best matches the funeral industry. The literature demonstrates that organisations today are dynamic, diverse and fluid and suggests that an accreditation model must be closely aligned to organisational theory.

The purpose of this study is to create a tool. It is therefore important to include a brief review of the literature about models and the nature of their construction.
Figure 2.1: Overview of Literature Review
2.2 Accreditation

Since 1990 organisations have moved away from a focus on structure and processes to more contemporary approaches on business management. The levels of quality delivered to clients and their feedback are more closely monitored and acted upon. This shift away from structure and process standards to outcomes has inevitably led to changes in how quality is measured and reported. Quality has improved as organisations concentrate upon innovation, reliability and flexibility, with the expectation that quality processes will be met or exceeded.

Although there are a variety of definitions of accreditation provided by Kerby and Weber (2000), Scrivens (1995), Sweeney (1995), Maniditis (1994) and Gass (1993), most of these definitions have the following elements in common:

- The establishment of a set of explicit standards;
- A peer-driven performance management system;
- A process that ensures and maintains minimum levels of quality;
- A system of evaluating the service provided;
- Established levels of performance and periodic evaluation; and
- A voluntary process based on audits conducted by peers.

Sweeney (1995, p. 117) refers to accreditation as “the process where an agency grants public recognition to an institution that meets certain established qualifications and periodic evaluations”. This definition fails to capture aspects of the accreditation process that are relevant to the main thrust of this study. Therefore, an amalgam of the previously listed authors is used, together with the researcher’s own definition (see Section 1.6.3).

2.2.1 Concepts of Accreditation

The value of an accreditation process is that standardisation, enhanced by systematic monitoring, ensures a focus on quality. Accreditation is a time consuming and disruptive process, and costing this process is problematic, as it is often difficult to separate accreditation work from routine work. As consumers have become more discerning, quality, a central concept of the accreditation process, has come to be regarded as an essential rather than a desirable feature of organisational operations and outputs.
The accreditation process is based on a philosophy of continuous quality improvement and incorporates an assessment of the system. An accreditation model is a representation that clarifies boundaries and relationships of the system it is designed to represent. The construction of an accreditation model is less about representing knowledge, and more about organising knowledge. According to Wierzbicki (2005, pp. 618), “knowledge is information that must be organised and synthesised in the form of an appropriate model”. An accreditation model is a cluster of these knowledge-related activities which interact to produce documented processes.

Models can provide a useful way of understanding complex theoretical issues in a practical manner, though simple representations of patterns and relationships. A well-designed model can connect theories and practices in an integrated and systematic way. Issues associated with modelling are discussed in full in Section 2.5.

Industry sectors such as health, tourism and education have had long histories with the process and implementation of accreditation. In all fields a high level of industry support is central to long-term success. The researcher has drawn lessons from the health sector (see Chapter Five) where there has been a thirty-year history of accreditation directed towards measuring a hospital’s influence on patient satisfaction levels. According to Scrivens (1995), those more mature accreditation systems restructured their models during the 1990s to reflect CQI systems with a focus on outcomes.

Hurst (1997) states that the increasing popularity of accreditation could be attributed to the strong quality assurance movement in health care. Hurst considered that the accreditation process was as valuable as its outcomes because it:

- Focused on policy making and monitoring;
- Involved all levels of staff;
- Improved communication; and
- Raised quality awareness.

Accreditation is increasingly being seen by governments and industry associations as a way of regulating and promoting quality. The objectives of accreditation include a reduction in variation across standards and the establishment of professional industry standards that are consistent and credible. These benefits of accreditation provide government and industry
associations with an assurance that individual, firm and consumer needs are being met through a uniform level of practice.

There are some dangers in the accreditation process according to Harris and Jago (2001). A particular downside of making accreditation a more rigorous process is the possibility that fewer people will be willing to commit the time and effort and other resources required to become accredited. This point is specifically addressed by the researcher in recommendations for further research in Chapter Six.

Julian and Ofori-Dankwa (2006) state that accreditation provides important advantages, such as legitimisation with external constituencies. However, the downside of this is that external accountability involves detailed documentation processes with inherent costs, a feature of accreditation models across all industries. The researcher believes this is not necessarily a downside, as inherent costs can only be considered in conjunction with the benefits of accreditation. The advantages of a staff learning process, and the process of describing what they do, implicit in an accreditation process, helps to protect organisations against legal risks, placing that organisation in greater control. Some of the perceived costs of accreditation fail to take into account the value of a writing culture (p. 225-233).

Bailey and Dangerfield (2000) contend that accreditation’s customer led-approach, rather than a market-driven approach, could lead to short-term goals and lower standards. Pfeiffer and Fong (2002) felt accreditation acted to maintain the status quo, whereas Yunker (2000, p. 351) was more forthright, stating that “it wastes time, breeds inefficiency and creates pointless paperwork”. The researcher received similar types of comments from several interviewees in the research project.

Some important issues associated with accreditation processes and identified by the literature are: who pays, who is accountable and who defines quality standards. Barker and Smith (1998) refer to the need for a cost-benefit analysis, due to the considerable amounts of staff time and money spent on accreditation, to ascertain whether it delivers justified return on investment. This is a reductionist argument. The issue is a much broader one than a single cost argument. The accreditation process induces holism, i.e., an integrated system, with an outcome measured in an overall increase in standards including staff education and performance.

Porter and Teisberg (2004) highlight the role competition plays in quality management. Competition within the funeral industry is already intense and the process of accreditation will
necessarily strengthen quality and standards. Quality methods need to be treated like any new investment or new technology, and their cost effectiveness questioned with a focus on an expected return on investment for the resources allocated to these activities. These points were raised by Pomey, Contandriopoulos, Francois and Bertrand (2004), Perrott (2002) and Hurst (1997). Top management must not neglect its responsibility for ensuring that the resources are spent on quality produce results. As was noted above, this cost benefit analysis is far more complex than a single factor analysis.

Time frames should be set for reviews and assessment of achievements (Rahman & Sohal, 2002; Calingo, 1996; Vinzant & Vinzant, 1996). The accreditation model developed in this dissertation refers to the need for standards to be accommodated within designated time frames. From the researcher’s experience, a lack of adequate documentation weakens the audit trail. This lack of documentation also leads to an inability of organisations to meet fundamental statutory requirements and regulatory standards.

Barker and Smith (1998), in examining the characteristics of accreditation and strategic planning, considered its main value to be a systems approach to the evaluation of strategy. The major advantage of this systemic approach is that organisations can make use of available resources in a more efficient manner. This area of strategy development is incorporated under Standard One, Business Systems, and Standard Three, Risk Management, in the accreditation model presented in Appendix One.

Pomey et al. (2004) highlight how accreditation can serve as an agent of change. Ideally, at the strategic and operational levels and through the self-assessment process, people will recognise the importance and necessity of implementing major changes. The accreditation process suggests new models of thought, and through the development of accreditation manuals it can become possible to better understand and implement various initiatives such as risk management programmes. These insights from the literature are important as they detail how accreditation models can measure and monitor quality issues that can significantly contribute to organisational effectiveness.

### 2.2.2 Quality

This section examines the literature about links between organisational effectiveness and quality aspects, such as standards, benchmarking, strategy, TQM and CQI. There are many definitions of quality according to Sharma and Gadewne (2002) and Forker (1996). Most of
these definitions share common claims about the importance of quality - such as the role of quality in helping a firm gain a competitive advantage, or as a pre-requisite for success in the marketplace. Robson and Prabhu (2001) considered that in terms of performance, critical measures of success are related to meeting customer needs for quality. Quality improvement is an iterative process and it is best facilitated by frequent monitoring, updating and revising of strategies.

Calingo (1996) proposes that a key to business success is an understanding of quality and the ways it can be integrated into company strategy. Similarly, Hamel and Prahalad (1994) consider that quality is no longer a competitive differentiator but the price of market entry. One of the six characteristics of organisational effectiveness built into the provisional accreditation model focuses on the area of quality.

The importance of a well-designed accreditation model is that it fosters quality as part of a company’s competitive strategy. Collis (1994) and Peters and Waterman (1982) indicate that companies that provide quality can charge more for their products, resulting in higher profit margins. Furthermore, provision of quality products has a stronger relationship to increases in market share than does price.

Quality is not only complex but also perceptual. Perceptions of quality have been built up through the past experience of individuals and their consumption of goods and services in various contexts. Consequently, quality encapsulates time and other contextual dimensions that add to the complexity of what is essentially a subjective evaluation of the quality goals of the consumer.

The development of an accreditation model for the funeral industry, through its measurement of quality standards, has the potential to reinforce a positive perception of quality in the mind of the consumer. Both the customer and the funeral director have histories of experience and expectations regarding quality and outcomes; however, there may be inconsistencies between those of the customer and the funeral director. Accreditation encourages practitioners to develop, improve and document business practices and procedures, through a peer driven performance management system which is re-evaluated periodically and audited by peers. As a consequence, the quality expectations and perceptions of the customers and the business can be brought into alignment.
2.2.2.1 Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

The literature advocates a focus on CQI to gain a competitive advantage. According to Anderson and Sohal (1999), firms which adopt quality management practices experience an overall improvement in corporate performance. As a means of gaining a competitive advantage in the market place, targeted and measurable quality indicators are critical. An accreditation model integrates quality into strategy through the use of a multi-factorial approach to strategy. Khoo and Tan (2002) suggest that continuous improvement is required for firms to keep up with changing external demands. Magd and Curry (2003) consider that quality is no longer merely about meeting customers’ expectations but is about exceeding them.

Johnson (2004) claims that a successful transformation to quality occurs when management succeeds in institutionalising the behavioural changes required for long-term success. This view is supported by Combe and Botschen (2004), Van der Wiele and Brown (2002) and Calingo (1996). Johnson (2004) developed a conceptual framework to institutionalise quality management standards. This framework incorporates the five components of leadership, strategy, structure, technology and culture to implement quality management standards. These five components have been adopted in the draft provisional accreditation model developed in this study, as the literature clearly identifies that these factors lead to organisational effectiveness.

According to Johnson (2004) the evolution of the quality movement involved shifts to TQM and SQM with a focus on CQI. The literature identifies successful organisations as those focusing not on competitors, but on bettering themselves and their own firm-internal benchmarks. A key success factor identified in the literature is the need for a continuous improvement philosophy across all areas of business. The key point that emerged from the literature review was that small incremental steps are required rather than massive immediate change. A focus on CQI is a fundamental pillar in the construction of the accreditation model, and is utilised in rating systems across each of four funeral standards and six major characteristics of organisational effectiveness. These standards and characteristics are explained more fully in Chapter Three.
Total quality management (TQM) is a management philosophy devised by Dening after the Second World War. According to Brockman (1993), TQM focuses relentlessly on the needs of the customer, both internal and external. It realigns organisations from detection to prevention, and aims to improve practices and thereby quality, continuously, via the use of statistical monitoring. Daft (1997) states that TQM is a concept that focuses on managing the total organisation to deliver quality to customers. There are four significant elements that make up the concept of TQM, and similarities exist between these elements, the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) and the provisional accreditation model. The four significant elements are employee involvement, focus on the customer, benchmarking and continuous improvement.

Jefferies et al. (1996) further defined TQM as a comprehensive and integrated way of managing any organisation in order to meet the needs of the customer consistently and achieve continuous improvement in every aspect of the organisation’s activities. Leonard and McAdam (2002) indicated that research (Hendricks and Singhal 1999) on quality award winners suggested that, when implemented effectively, TQM produces dramatically improved financial performance.

In an exploration of the literature, Rahman and Sohal (2002) provided a systematic analysis of TQM articles published by Australian researchers. Over 40% of the articles, focusing on leadership and innovation, conclude that top management must be involved in establishing strategic direction, vision and goals. Evidence from the review of these articles suggests, however, that quality is no longer the top priority for many organisations. Innovation, responsiveness and flexibility have become key issues and many quality programs have been extended or adopted to include these aspects.

When measuring activities that are indicators of creativity and innovation, ‘responsiveness to change’ adds quality to new systems and product packages, and the way the business functions. Outcomes are improvements that raise client satisfaction levels.

Managers require an understanding of the advantages and limitations of various procedures used for the management of quality if they are to deal effectively with complexity. Important contextual issues such as level of external environmental change, nature of the industry, organisation, markets served and level of competition render some procedures more appropriate than others. As complexity increases, there is a growing need to consider an integrationist view for the management of quality. This was an implicit understanding of the
researcher as he constructed the model based upon the integration of the six major drivers that lead to organisational effectiveness.

Combe and Botschen (2004) contend that a comprehensive and integrated approach, particularly when complexity increases, is a better way to manage quality issues, because a single procedure approach only offers partial solutions. The provisional accreditation model is constructed with the six major drivers of organisational effectiveness integrated.

2.3 Evaluation Frameworks

2.3.1 Business Excellence Awards

Frameworks and business excellence awards such as the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF), the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), the Malcolm Baldrige Award (based on the Deming Prize in Japan), and ISO 9000 are all awards or frameworks that promote and encourage greater reliance on a best practice philosophy. The advent of TQM meant that these awards and frameworks became identified with the notion of supporting continuous improvement through a structured measurable process. Biazzo and Bernardi (2003) consider that excellence awards lead to a commitment to quality. Justification for including this literature is that excellence awards provide an incentive for higher performers to compete at the elite level, and for status with their peers and consumers.

According to Eskildsen (2001), the EFQM was intended to be an instrument for comparing one organisation with another organisation, or to rate one organisation against a commonly adopted scoreboard, with a focus on quality improvement. Haque and Pawar (2003) also acknowledge the need for excellence frameworks that monitor and measure structures as a way of measuring effectiveness, which they regard as the key to achieving better performing organisations.

The ISO 9000, first introduced in 1987, is a set of internationally agreed standards based on the concept of continuous quality improvement. Van der Wiele et al. (2000) state that these standards are based on certain minimum characteristics of a quality management system that can be standardised, giving mutual benefit to suppliers and customers, with a focus on process rather than product quality. However, a contrary view suggests that these models have costs and implementation issues (Brown, 1999, and Brown, Van der Wiele & Loughton, 1998). The obvious implication of these assertions are a clearer definition that will be necessary
around the price point and the imperative to manage the business more adeptly to achieve profitability.

### 2.3.2 The Balanced Scorecard (BSC)

As well as business excellence frameworks and awards that establish criteria focusing on quality, there are other frameworks, e.g., the BSC, that are claimed to lead to organisational effectiveness. Owen, Mundy, Guild and Guild (2001) refer to the BSC as a framework that links organisational strategy with day-to-day operations providing a set of performance metrics that evaluate whether performance goals are being met.

The BSC utilises a multi-dimensional approach, integrating four major dimensions of a business by linking the goals of the organisation to specific performance measures. The BSC is supported by considerable organisational theory and was therefore, incorporated within the accreditation model developed in this project.

The BSC evolved from a performance management system to a strategic management system when the authors further improved the scorecard concept in 1996. As a consequence of further enhancements, the BSC became a management tool which encompassed the importance of stakeholders other than shareholders. This focus on the customer as a stakeholder was also a principle in the design of the provisional accreditation model, a feature shared with the health sector’s model.

The four main elements of the BSC – the customer, financial processes, internal processes, and innovation & learning – were all incorporated in various ways into the provisional accreditation model designed for the Funeral Industry (see Appendix One). The BSC represented a fundamental change from organisations attempting to control behaviour through tools such as ISO 9000 to a scorecard which concentrated on strategy and vision. It assumed that people would adapt their behaviours to arrive at strategic goals if they were directly involved in the goal-setting process.

The value of the BSC is that it has been used and tested in a range of diverse industries, across the profit and not-for-profit sectors. Its application and acceptance in a range of industries indicates its value as a means of measurement. The BSC provides a simple-to-understand tool that can be utilised in complex situations to establish frameworks for measuring identified
outcomes against strategic objectives. Therefore, the elements of the BSC clearly have the potential for transferability across industry sectors.

2.4 Drivers of Organisational Effectiveness

2.4.1 Introduction

Earlier sections in this chapter, i.e., Accreditation, Quality and Evaluation Frameworks, reviewed measures of performance rather than drivers of performance. The researcher reviewed the literature on accreditation, quality and evaluation frameworks from the perspective of how these areas could be incorporated within the construction of the accreditation model, as measures of organisational effectiveness through a lens on quality and performance management. The current section seeks to identify the drivers of organisational effectiveness. An attempt is made to identify gaps that might exist if drivers of quality were wrongly assumed to be, in the model design, identical to those associated with organisational effectiveness. The literature on quality, for instance, may have neglected or overlooked some of the drivers of quality. An attempt is made to identify gaps that might exist in model design if drivers of quality were even wrongly assumed to be identical to those associated with organisational effectiveness.

2.4.2 Organisational Effectiveness

Robbins and Barnwell (2006, p. 76) define organisational effectiveness as “the degree to which an organisation achieves its short term (means) and long term (ends) goals, the selection of which affects strategic constituencies in the organisation’s environment, the self interests of the evaluator and the life stage of the organisation.” They describe the organisation as a living entity that exists within a social and political environment. These considerations about the design of an accreditation model and process itself are discussed more fully in Chapter Three.

The Robbins and Barnwell (2006) definition of organisational effectiveness relates to at least three elements of the accreditation process:

- Necessity for an holistic approach to accreditation. The various streams of activity in the organisational process all need to be integrated together to achieve high levels of effectiveness.
• Necessity for the phasing in of the process with grandparenting clauses in the early stages of measuring quality performance. This phasing in process allows a wide number of firms at different levels to be accommodated. Fully functioning organisations which are fully engaged in the accreditation process, it is argued, function at much higher levels.

• Appropriateness of the four-tier measurement rating system, allowing for grading from lower levels to higher levels of efficiency.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) described organisations as made up of people, each of whom has varied functions that contribute both to the whole, and also to collective functions. Therefore, an organisation of people, as directed by the manager, must be capable of having an intended or expected effect. The leaders of these organisations need to manage and direct people over a range of important work tasks to ensure that the work is carried out effectively, and to ensure that the goals of the organisation are met. Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) contend that the ability to build effective capabilities is a significant driver of performance. Grant (1991) considers that an organisation’s capabilities are the firm’s capacity to deploy its assets, tangible or intangible, to perform a task or activity to improve its performance.

The publications pertaining to definitions of organisational effectiveness cited above indicate that effectiveness is concerned with meeting organisational needs, and a firm being able to deploy its assets to improve performance. Whilst each of these contributions to the literature is useful, the researcher considers that Robbins and Barnwell (2006) best define organisational effectiveness in relation to the construction of this accreditation model. This is a superior reference, as it is definitive, clear and comprehensive. The authors recognise the reality of the organisational environment, and as such many elements of their definition can be translated to different aspects of the provisional accreditation model. For example, team building is important for the industry. High turnover of staff demonstrates the importance of staff development to provide quality service at a time of fluidity in the industry.

Today’s organisations need to be more accountable to a growing number of stakeholders. Business leaders need to understand how these stakeholders’ concerns translate into financial and non-financial risks, and how to manage, measure and report on the effectiveness of the organisation. Organisations today are making increasingly complex decisions, and the challenge for leaders is to make effective decisions which are integrated into the organisation’s strategy. Arnaratuga and Baldry (2003) state that integration refers to the ability to promote alignment between various areas of the business. Zott (2003) further
suggests that there is increasing evidence that a firm’s performance is affected by its ability to integrate, build and reconfigure their resources and competitiveness.

2.4.3 Performance Management

According to Santos, Belton and Howick (2002), for the purpose of dealing with rapidly changing and complex business environments, several performance management frameworks have been developed to overcome the criticisms made of financially focused systems. Some of these frameworks have been the performance pyramid (Lynch & Cross, 1991), the results and determinants framework (Fitzgerald et al., 1991) the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1992) and more recently, the performance prism (Neely et al., 2002). Kloot (1999) also stated that performance management promotes accountability to stakeholders.

These frameworks go beyond financial metrics in identifying specific factors: human resources, quality, compliance, information systems, leadership and innovation and change. All these areas have been included in the construction of the accreditation model put forward in this thesis. It has long been recognised that comprehensive performance management is vital to the success and development of organisations.

A ten year study of the formula for business success, conducted by Nohria, Joyce and Roberson (2003), developed a 4 x 2 framework that successful companies had in common, and recommended at least two out of four secondary management practices: talent, innovation, leadership and mergers and partnerships to increase the probability of success.

Similarly, Phelps (2004) identified human resources, performance management and change management in his evaluation framework. These features were also included in the construction of the provisional accreditation model, under the heading of innovation and change, one of the six key drivers of organisational effectiveness. Phelps is not a lone voice but clearly states a commonly held view that is prevalent within the literature, and as a practitioner, I would concur with these views.

Rouse and Putterill (2003) examined a number of frameworks of performance management. The key concepts emerging from those frameworks were quality, finances, customer focus, strategy, information systems, innovation and human resources. All these areas are incorporated in the provisional funeral accreditation model as described in Chapter Three.
This literature provides a sub set of elements relevant to performance management and the model.

O’Regan and Ghobadian (2004) also maintain that for performance management systems to be credible they need to provide more than financial measures. Performance management is concerned with how an organisation does what it does, how well it does it, and how much progress it makes over time in achieving its goals, but most importantly it assists in the management of organisational change.

Johnson (2004), Combe and Botschen (2004), Van der Wiel and Brown (2002) and Calingo (1996) suggest that a successful transformation to quality occurs when management succeeds in institutionalising the behavioural change required for long-term success. The issue of change in relation to accreditation is going to be felt most strongly by small to medium enterprise organisations (SMEs). It is anticipated that the funeral industry will experience rapid change due to socio-economic factors, such as an increased death rate. Funeral firms will need to become more efficient at what they do and adapt to a changing external environment. Change is both about doing more of the same (at an increased output) and doing something different in relation to funeral service provision.

The literature on SMEs in relation to performance management is highly relevant to this study. The researcher is aware of the number of SME funeral firms in Victoria and the impact an accreditation process might have on these firms. Biazzo and Bernardi (2003) indicated that SMEs were fairly unreceptive to organisational and managerial innovations, and the tension between firm and family was frequently accompanied by unfocused organisation roles. The importance of this research project’s accreditation model is that it will assist in identifying and overcoming these tensions and confusions in relation to accreditation.

Mastrangelo, Eddy and Lorenzet (2004) and Goleman (2000) support the need to take a long-term view of a business, with the aim of building sustainable, enduring enterprises. However, the leadership within the funeral industry is generally geared to short- to medium-term time horizons. Many SMEs, are unwilling to commit to large-scale investment and building programmes that lead to potential overcapitalisation, given uncertainty about whether future family members will follow them into the family funeral business. One of the investments of concern could be the implementation of an accreditation model. An awareness of this factor has been built into the implementation proposals for the industry, which is discussed more fully in Chapters Five and Six.
O’Dwyer and Ryan (2000) remark that in many SMEs, meeting and satisfying the objectives of the owners rather than achievement of high levels of customer satisfaction is the measure of organisational effectiveness. One of the current quality assurance problems of the funeral industry in Victoria is that there are no barriers to entry, and hence some newly established firms have low quality standards. New entrants to the funeral industry will need to commit to minimum standards of quality if an accreditation process is introduced and mandated. The researcher believes that SME owners could be encouraged to pursue quality through a focus on customer satisfaction levels, rather than the profit motive.

O’Regan and Ghobadin (2004) indicate on the basis of their research into 194 manufacturing-based SMEs that a focus on customer satisfaction levels (a major feature in the construction of the provisional accreditation model) leads to organisational effectiveness. Similarly, Hays and Upton (1998) claim that the literature is clear that firms differ based on their organisational capabilities, and that SMEs do compete successfully with large firms. The construction of the accreditation model takes this into account when deciding that regardless of size or location, generic standards need to be met within the accreditation process by all firms.

For SMEs and for large firms, Kangis and Williams (2000) claim that organisational culture may be viewed as a predictor of organisational performance. Kaplan and Norton (2004) suggest that since culture relates to strategy as changes occur in the way business is conducted, at all levels of an organisation, this means that people need to develop new attitudes and behaviours. The importance of culture is further discussed in Chapter Three when Egan’s 1993 model C is described, together with the need to be aware of the shadow side of culture and the damage that misalignment of culture and strategy can cause to organisations.

**2.4.4 Longitudinal Perspectives on Organisational Performance**

**2.4.4.1 Introduction**

The early sections in this chapter examined organisational effectiveness through the lens of quality, evaluation frameworks and performance management generally. Linkages of these factors with the accreditation process and the construction of the provisional accreditation model have been described.
2.4.4.2 Built to Last (BTL)

In *Built to Last, Successful habits of visionary companies*, Collins and Porras (1994) claimed to identify the underlying characteristics and dynamics common to highly successful companies, distinguishing them from comparable but less successful companies in the same industry. In excess of seven hundred CEOs were asked to nominate five companies they perceived as visionary. Through a rigorous methodological process, eighteen companies founded between 1812-1945 were finally selected.

Comparisons between companies maximised the chances of focusing on differences, rather than simply on good practices. Comparative analysis did give greater confidence that the causes identified were not just random correlations and indicated that these characteristics were generally predictive of success. Each of the companies and comparison companies was examined in detail and the data were coded into nine categories of information and distilled into key concepts which were linked together in an explanatory framework. These concepts were examined by the researcher to detect the underlying fundamental principals, patterns or trends. This procedure gave the researcher confidence that cause-effect relationships had been uncovered by Collins and Porras (1994).

Three key findings that were relevant to creating an accreditation model for funeral firms emerged from BTL. First was the need to establish core values that drive a company beyond just financial benchmarks. In visionary companies, whilst practices may change, core values never changed once established. Areas such as strategy, selection of senior staff, tactics, organisational systems, structure and job design were all aligned to a core ideology which gave guidance and inspiration to people in firms. Hubbard et al. (2002) similarly identified that employees need to generally feel that what they are doing is of significant value.

The second key finding emerging from BTL disproved the myth that effective firms need to have charismatic or high profile leadership. The evidence suggests that traits such as humility, thoughtfulness, persistence and good listening skills were more important than charisma. Under these more balanced leaders, successful companies tend to do well in the short term and very well in the long term. It was often not the quality of leaders, but the continuity of leadership that set successful firms apart. These firms had a strong emphasis on development of internal staff and the appointment of a CEO was always from within the organisation.
The third key finding emerging from BTL was that successful organisations set Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAG) as bold aspirational targets to stretch organisations to stimulate progress. BHAG fall outside comfort zones and require risk and vision. They have to provide a clear compelling goal, with a clear finish line. Hubbard et al. (2002), however, considered that in the Australian context this finding was less relevant, as employees considered audacious goals to be too risky and prone to failure. Here employees are less bold and less likely to be risk takers. The researcher’s own experience is contrary to Hubbard et al. (2002) in that his employees prefer to have clearly articulated goals and target dates.

The researcher applies concepts derived from BTL in the development of an accreditation framework. Elements of the following four principles are evident in the provisional model (Chapter Four and Appendix One). By applying the four central principles from BTL, the researcher developed a framework of accreditation derived from the principles that have driven enduring successful companies. These four principles are:

1. Building organisations that endure and adapt through multiple generations of leaders and product life cycles;
2. Embracing both extremes on a number of dimensions at once, for example, purpose and profit, continuity and change;
3. Instilling core values and purpose as principles to guide decisions; and
4. Changing practices and strategies while holding core values and purpose fixed.

These principles are reflected in the accreditation model in the following ways:

- An holistic approach measures all the streams of activities and a four-tier measurement system applies a graduated scale for monitoring extremes.
- The model focuses on a continued need to refine indices.
- The holistic approach allows for dual focuses on the business and the client.
- Organisational change practices within the parameters of quality improvement lead to higher performance levels.

2.4.4.3 Good to Great (GTG)

In the study *Good to Great* (GTG), which is similar to the BTL study, Collins (2001) reviewed over fourteen hundred companies, finally selecting eleven companies, and using six
different types of criteria, which were then collected and coded into eleven categories. Seven key principles emerged from the GTG findings.

The first principle is that it was important that leadership be promoted from within the organisation to ensure continuity of leadership. Leaders from organisationally effective firms showed diligence and persistence, were fanatically driven to produce sustained results and set up their successors for even greater success in the next generation. These firms placed strong emphasis on selecting the right people who matched the core ideology of the firm. The selection process had more to do with personal character traits and innate capabilities than with specific knowledge. The term “Hedgehog Concept” developed by Collins (2001) captures the need to set goals and strategies based on a realistic understanding of how a firm can establish best practice standards. This concept, however, had to be examined in the context of the organisation being able to confront the brutal facts about the current reality of the internal and external environment. The need for a culture of discipline in organisations was also explored. This required people to adhere to a consistent system, yet also allowed employees the freedom of responsibility within a disciplined framework. Hence, opportunities were shunned if they fell outside the core ideology of the organisation.

Collins (2001) argued that alignment and commitment followed from results and momentum, not the other way around. Thus continuous incremental steps are what lead to sustainable transformation. Leaders needed to persistently push in a consistent direction over a long period of time, before firms became fully effective. What needs to be understood is that success does not occur overnight, and it can take up to five years before results become evident. Egan (1993) and Kilmann (1989) concurred with this view. The common linkages between these three authors and their findings is that being aware and fully understanding of what and where you can excel allows firms to clarify yet simplify their core ideology, which in turn drives their economic engine. Alignment of these factors is a driver of effective and sustainable companies.

2.4.4.4 The First XI – Winning Organisations in Australia

Hubbard et al. (2002) in *The First XI – Winning organisations in Australia*, identified nine key elements in their framework that capture the interacting drivers of performance for winning organisations in Australia. The authors employed a similar methodology to Collins and Porras (1994) and Collins (2001). They surveyed over one thousand chief executives of
Australia’s largest organisations, and then analysed the data. They defined winning as being extremely successful over a long period of time. Organisations included in the study had to be at least twenty years old and had to have had more than one chief executive. Nearly two hundred organisations were nominated and a rigorous selection process reduced the list to eleven organisations. Unlike in BTL and GTG, these authors did not identify comparison organisations, a major weakness in their ultimate findings. One cannot take their finds and transfer them with confidence, without further researcher testing in a new context. However, the common factors that applied across the winning organisations were nevertheless insightful, and are relevant to this study.

The authors outlined nine key elements, placing the main emphasis on effective execution. To deliver results, clear processes accepted by everyone were required. These processes were based around good management, central systems and rigorously managed performance outcomes. Whilst strategy was seen as the main driver of alignment, culture, values and leadership were also considered important. The need to change, adapt continually and rapidly to new circumstances was emphasised, as was the need to develop a culture of continuous improvement, with innovations in better processes and products and services. An important attribute of successful firms was making decisive, consistent decisions with a long-term view.

The researcher has also examined three longitudinal studies that investigate the drivers of performance in relation to what made firms organisationally effective. These three studies, Hubbard, Samuel, Heap and Cocks (2002), Collins (2001) and Collins and Porras (1994), each with strong methodological foundations, examined a number of firms over long periods of time. Their findings contributed to the construction of the provisional accreditation model, specifically in the adoption of the six major drivers of organisational effectiveness (see Appendix One).

The researcher chose to embrace Hubbard et al. (2002), Collins (2001), Collins and Porras (1994), Egan (1993) and Kilmann (1989), instead of other publications, for two reasons. Firstly, the research methods and approaches that lie behind the claims of these authors are impressively objective and well-founded. Secondly, it was important to base the accreditation model on literature that was well known, to help convince practitioners to embrace the accreditation model. There were therefore both pragmatic and epistemological reasons for favouring these authors and their findings. Practitioners would be unlikely to embrace an accreditation model based on the work of unknown authors.
Hubbard et al. (2002) were the only authors identified in the literature review to specifically focus on risk management. These authors pointed to the need to understand the variety of risks which can affect long-term results and understand techniques for managing these risks. Their ultimate conclusion regarding successful organisations was that each of the key elements had to be aligned with the others.

2.5 Models

2.5.1 Introduction

This section reviews the literature on model building and conceptualisation. The researcher examines how models are constructed, and then utilises the literature on organisational performance and exemplars from the health sector and funeral industry in the construction of the provisional accreditation model.

2.5.2 Model Building

Models are representations of real life that can be presented in a variety of forms. According to Zuber-Skerritt (2002), model building is a process of establishing patterns and relationships. It is a simple representation of a theory or message in the form of a concept map or diagram and is the essence of a message or theory in minimum form, whether in language and graphics. Magretta (2002) states that models capture how pieces of a business fit together. According to Wierzbicki (2005), knowledge is information that must be organised and synthesised in the form of appropriate models.

The process of model building, according to Zuber-Skerritt (2002, p. 144), involves the following:

- Looking for core categories, issues or problems in the data;
- Identifying sub-categories;
- Patterning the relationships;
- Drawing various shapes (i.e., circles, spirals, square or round boxes);
- Drawing lines and arrows between concepts and labelling the relationships; and
• Experimenting, getting feedback from others, revising until the best way of representing the data, results or conclusions gradually emerges.

The researcher addressed these six points by:

• Identifying with the expert funeral practitioners that four funeral standards were appropriate to and represented their business;

• Applying separate indices under each of the four funeral standards;

• Ensuring that the four funeral standards were patterned across horizontal rows;

• Ensuring the model was in the form of a grid shape;

• Applying a four-tier measurement system across the relationships; and

• Detailing in the indices the results and findings of the expert panel that emerged from the interviews in the indices.

Senge (1990) stated that to get insights into the real causes of problems, people must learn to see structures rather than events, and think in terms of processes rather than static snapshots. Similarly, Khoo and Tan (2002) state that systems thinking enables an understanding of how events are connected to each other.

Egan (1993) established a useful conceptual framework that assisted in integrating and representing the findings of Hubbard et al. (2002), Collins (2001) and Collins and Porras (1994) concerning organisational effectiveness. Egan’s (1993) model employed a dynamic framework to manage complex situations and focused on three major outcomes:

• Satisfied customers;

• Committed and productive employees; and

• Financial returns.

Figure 2.2 presents a synopsis of what Egan (1993) provides as his model A, where six master tasks are grouped into three distinct sub-categories, with each combining two master tasks:

1. Business Systems
   a. Strategy
   b. Operations
2. Organisation of the System
   a. Structure
   b. Human Resources
3. Management and Leadership
   a. Management and Supervision
   b. Leadership

Each of these three sub-categories and six master tasks are incorporated within the draft accreditation model, focusing upon the three major outcomes of satisfied customers, committed and productive employees, and high financial returns.
Figure 2.2: Egan’s Model (Egan, 1993, p. 129)
Kilmann (1989) defined organisational effectiveness as “a matter of creating and maintaining high performances and satisfaction for both internal and external stakeholders over an extended period of time”. Kilmann (1989) considered that multiple approaches were needed to help manage complex problems, and managers needed a variety of leverage points in order to control and monitor performance and morale. Multiple approaches to organisational effectiveness means influencing all organisational aspects, particularly below the surface aspects such as culture, assumptions that are not questioned and the psychological dimensions of human nature. Kilmann’s (1989) framework assists in understanding the essence of organisations and the identification of interrelated barriers that can interfere with creating and maintaining organisational success.

Senge (1990) compliments Kilmann’s (1989) views in regards to measurement and systems thinking. In contrast to Senge, Kilmann considers there are multiple approaches to deliver different types of functions. Both authors focus on the same outcome, high quality.

Kilmann’s (1989) framework identifies the interrelated barriers that can interfere with creating and maintaining organisational success. He argues that barriers to success can be removed by using and implementing five action levers:

1. The culture track;
2. The management skills track;
3. The team building track;
4. The strategy-structure track; and
5. The reward system track.
Identified tracks need to be implemented in sequential order to ensure barriers to success are transferred into channels for success. The first track develops a culture to foster trust, communications, information sharing and willingness to change among group members. The second track has managers learning new skills for solving complex problems, and uncovering and updating their past assumptions, but there needs to be a supportive culture for this to happen. The third track enables work groups to make use of the new culture and updated skills to solve business problems, as this helps ensure the terms become more effective. The fourth track guides these teams to address the firm’s own strategy and structure. The fifth track designs a reward system to sustain high performance and morale into the future.
The researcher’s framework was developed by making sense of the literature on organisational effectiveness, and integrating and rearranging the essence of that literature into the provisional funeral accreditation model.

The theoretical literature on modelling of organisational processes (Egan, 1993, and Kilmann, 1989) approaches organisations as a collection of systems that have a reality over and above what individuals understand about the organisation. Whilst acknowledging being aware there are epistemological complications concerning the shadow and cultural sides of organisations, the researcher found Egan (1993), and Kilmann (1989) models useful guides for representing the findings from the literature about the major factors that drive organisational effectiveness. By combining the theoretical models of Zuber-Skerrit’s (2002), Egan (1993) and Kilmann (1989), the researcher was able to develop and construct a model which links and applies the literature about organisational theory directly to the funeral industry.

The provisional accreditation model suggests that successful alignment of all six major drivers ensures satisfied customers, satisfied employees and sound financial returns, enabling organisational effectiveness to be reached. The importance of leadership and vision are integral to being able to ensure integration of all six major characteristics to provide alignment.

2.6 Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review serves two purposes. The first is to arrive at the current state of knowledge concerning the factors which account for organisational effectiveness, and the second is to reach a position from which the researcher could construct an accreditation model for the funeral industry, based on the central concepts that are found in the literature. The earlier sections of this chapter, i.e., accreditation, quality and evaluation frameworks, relate to the measures of performance, whereas the later sections explored the drivers of performance. Figure 2.1 illustrates the enablers and drivers of organisational effectiveness and how they integrate and interact with each other. These drivers and enablers were all utilised in the construction of the accreditation model.

The earlier sections in this literature review focussed specifically on addressing the drivers of performance in a more general sense, whereas the last section focussed on a series of longitudinal studies and specific authors, i.e., Hubbard et al. (2002), Collins (2001) and Collins and Porras (1994), who have conducted longitudinal research into the drivers of
organisational effectiveness. Both perspectives are relevant to inductive thinking for the purpose of this project.

In summary, the six key characteristics that contribute to organisational effectiveness and are incorporated in the construction of the accreditation model were Leadership, Human Resources, Quality, Information Systems, Compliance, and Innovation and Change. The literature suggested that a focus on these six key characteristics would allow for a more efficient and quality-driven industry to emerge, with an emphasis on continuous improvement and the provision of a better service that can be measured consistently. The literature on modelling has uncovered useful ideas and concepts concerning how and why models are constructed. The next chapter focuses on the development and construction of a provisional accreditation model.
Chapter Three

The Provisional Accreditation Model

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature which is representative of the current state of knowledge concerning the factors which drive organisational effectiveness and modelling. This chapter moves from the literature on theory to explore how complex concepts and theories can be represented in the form of a comprehensible model. In essence, it demonstrates the application of theory to practice. The researcher explains how his provisional accreditation model was constructed, drawing upon the central concepts that are found in the organisational literature and the health sector’s accreditation model.

The provisional accreditation model is constructed around principles and categories that had previously been developed by using some of the excellence frameworks. The Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF) identified key concepts important to quality and organisational effectiveness that are included in the provisional accreditation model (i.e., leadership, information systems, human resources, continuous improvement and quality determined by the customer). The importance of the ABEF is that it outlines the need for effective measurement over all management areas, rather than being confined to financial measures.

The conclusions of Chapter Two in relation to the six drivers of organisational effectiveness were integrated with elements of the health sector’s rating measurement system and applied and incorporated to evaluate and measure standards for the funeral industry. Critical to any model or framework’s successful outcome is how the framework is designed. (See Appendix One for the provisional accreditation model

After an extensive review of the literature on organisational theory and modelling, the researcher was able to organise the knowledge about funeral service provision into a structured form of four separate funeral standards: Business Systems, Operations, Risk Management and Client Management. Each standard has sub-categories which are
represented by elements of funeral service drawn from the literature and exemplars used by comparable industries.

The researcher incorporated the four funeral standards within the construction of the accreditation model framework. Figure 3.1 illustrates this basic framework and how the provisional model was constructed. The process of construction of the provisional model might be considered similar to the construction of a building. The provisional model could be described as having strong beams (i.e., four funeral standards), vertical columns (i.e., six drivers of organisational effectiveness) and horizontal slats associated with each of the four beams (i.e., four-tier rating measurement system). This structure is explained in the following section.

3.2 The Development of a Conceptual Funeral Accreditation Model

3.2.1 Introduction

In order to build a framework that captures the multi-dimensional nature of organisational effectiveness, the researcher adopted a 6x4x4 funeral framework model. This matrix is based primarily on the conceptual models by Egan (1993) and Kilmann (1989) as well as the health sector’s EQUIP model. Figure 3.5 illustrates in detail how the 6x4x4 funeral framework integrates elements and indices to create the framework of the provisional accreditation model.

Insights drawn from Egan (1993) indicate that the construction of any new funeral accreditation model needs to take account of and integrate sufficient factors to manage complex situations. Egan’s (1993) model was utilised as a guide in the construction of the accreditation model, by ensuring that the six master tasks were incorporated within each of the four funeral standards. The importance of Egan’s factors was discussed in Chapter Two. The elements are used in the model as criteria to cluster elements of funeral service.

Reference was made in the literature to the importance of Egan’s (1993) model B, which referred to managing change and the need to respond rapidly to different types of change, (see Section 2.5.2). The researcher’s provisional accreditation model incorporates innovation and change as one of the six drivers of organisational effectiveness. Continual improvement across each of the four funeral standards is a focus of the provisional accreditation model.
Egan’s (1993) model C captures the ‘shadow side’ of change through the dimensions of culture, politics, social systems, individual behaviours and the negative impact that misalignment can cause to organisations. This model referred to the realities that are rarely discussed in formal settings, but can nevertheless cause or contribute to business disruptions. Being aware of how to manage diversity, the politics of self-interest, embedded culture and how to identify and manage individual behaviours are undeniably important skills for managers if they wish to lead effective organisations. This observation raises the questions for which answers will be sought in the interview process.

These ‘shadow’ factors were reflected in the provisional accreditation model to the extent that the provisional model incorporates culture and leadership. The researcher’s own experience supports Egan’s (1993) views. Areas of the provisional accreditation model such as leadership and human resources acknowledge the fact that ‘shadow’ areas need to be identified and acted upon by comprehensive management systems.

Kilmann’s (1989) conceptual framework was useful in constructing the provisional accreditation model, as it shifted the researcher’s focus to areas that interfered with organisational effectiveness. Each of Kilmann’s (1989) five action levers or tracks are underpinned within the draft accreditation model. For example, the first issue about culture is incorporated in the construction of each of the four funeral standards and is also supported by the literature on organisational effectiveness. The area of innovation and change is one of the six key drivers of organisational effectiveness and is incorporated in each of the four funeral standards. The provisional accreditation model also incorporates information systems and human resources. These two drivers were also identified by the literature as important foundations for organisational effectiveness.

In developing the provisional accreditation model, the key findings of Hubbard et al. (2002), Collins (2001) and Collins and Porras (1994) have been incorporated within the model. Egan’s (1993) conceptual framework was applied as a means of illustrating how organisational effectiveness can be pursued by funeral firms in Victoria.

Egan’s (1993) model (Figure 2.2) is a powerful influence on the design of the provisional accreditation model in that business decisions must focus on the customer. The six master tasks in Model A were incorporated in the accreditation model in Standard 1 (Business Systems) and Standard 2 (Operations). Model B includes Innovation and Change, which was one of the six major drivers of organisational effectiveness. Standard 3 (Risk Management) was identified specifically in the Australian context by Hubbard et al. (2002) and was
considered to be an important single characteristic of effectiveness, as it monitors performance and compliance to ensure a firm’s long-term viability and financial position.
Figure 3.1: How the Accreditation Model for the Funeral Industry was Constructed
3.3 Overview of the Resources Applied in the Construction of the Provisional Model

3.3.1 Introduction

This section explores how the resources were applied in the construction of the provisional model. The influences on the model, such as the literature, exemplars and benchmarks from the health sector and the funeral industry, are discussed in the construction of the provisional model.

3.3.2 How the Provisional Model was Created and Refined

This section describes how the provisional model was created and refined and how the process to integrate, apply and operationalise the design was achieved. Elements of the provisional model were developed from the literature (see Chapter Two) and the model was constructed layer by layer, upon the basic ideas about organisational theory that were discovered to be effective. Egan’s (1993) approach to the customer was a central focus of the model. Similarly, an awareness of Kilmann’s (1989) views on culture and innovation and change influenced the shape and construction of the provisional model.

3.3.3 Exemplars and Benchmarks

3.3.3.1 Introduction

Exemplars and benchmarks are samples of models or parts of models that have been developed for various purposes and have been tested in the field. The exemplars and examples used in this model have been developed from:

- The health sector EQUIP model; and
- The AQF funeral framework curriculum standards.

These standards have been validated by rigorous research and experience in the field.

3.3.3.2 Health Sector Exemplars

The health sector’s accreditation model, i.e., the EQUIP model, was examined in detail. This model seemed particularly relevant, because of the similarities of the health sector to the
funeral industry. In addition, the health accreditation model was a working model, with clearly defined quality standards.

The health sector’s accreditation process has evolved since its introduction in the 1970s. Since the mid 1990s there has been a shift from an accreditation focus on building and equipment to a focus on the customer. The health accreditation model evolved from the original theoretical framework to include aspects of organisational theory.

Specifically these recent versions of the accreditation process included areas such as:

- Leadership
- Governance
- Team Building
- Client Satisfaction
- CQI

3.3.3.3 The Literature on the Health Sector

Hemmasi and Strong (1994) examined the health industry and explored the concept of quality assessment and the critical impact quality issues are having on strategic planning for industries. Their insight was that difficulties arise when employing benchmarking as a means of comparison across industries, particularly the manufacturing sector, because different issues apply to service based firms. This observation is relevant to the funeral and health sectors.

Perrott (2002) found that the evolution of thinking around quality in health care up to 1990 was accepted as an event-based responsibility of management and staff. In early 1990, quality was recognised as a continuous process rather than an event only practised at the time of accreditation. The accreditation model constructed in this study requires firms to enact a continuous quality process that is measured over four different funeral standards of the industry and is very similar to the health sector’s accreditation model. This similarity will be further discussed in this chapter.

Blum (1996) examined aspects of change in the hospitality industry over a six year period and linked the strategy of the organisation around learning and development back to the changing needs and responses required by the hospitality industry.
The construction of the provisional accreditation model for the funeral industry incorporates Blum’s (1996) key findings that to remain competitive in the future, organisations must:

1. Become more responsive to changing needs of customers and employees;
2. Develop measurements around quality definitions;
3. Focus on education and training needs to meet new ethical, cultural and technological issues; and
4. Have clear understandings of their own strategic direction to meet the challenges of societal changes.

Mohamed (2003) and Bharadwag, Varadaragan and Fahy (1993) in their study of service industries stressed the importance of workplace culture and performance. The literature certainly suggests that culture and performance have positive or negative economic value for firms. Sustainable competitive advantage is also discussed as a positive in the literature about evaluation frameworks such as the BSC. Both Kanji and Sa (2002) and Kaplan and Norton (1992) stress the importance of learning and development as key items in their scorecards. Culture is relevant to firms of all sizes as it is a key strategic driver in sustaining a competitive advantage for organisations.

The literature on human services industries indicates that the emerging themes in relation to industry strategy are about change, quality measurement and how to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. Differing responses and strategies are dependent upon the speed of industry change, according to Nakdarni and Narayanan (2004), and how firms within an industry come together when threatened by outside environmental matters, such as government regulation. This finding relates directly to the involvement of the AFDA leading up to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into funeral regulation. The literature demonstrates that evaluation frameworks contribute to strategy formulation and implementation across and within industries.

Barnett (2004) explored how firms strategically allocate their limited resources between competitive pursuits and industry-wide cooperation. The decision that influences resource allocation to either corporate or industry strategy depends on the nature of external threats industries face. Industry associations can present a united front and speak with a unified voice that can shape institutional opinion. If government intervention is likely to constrain an industry’s profitability, then individual firms will reallocate resources to develop and protect an industry strategy.
3.3.3.4 The Health Sector’s EQUIP Accreditation Model

The health sector’s EQUIP model was a significant exemplar in the construction of the provisional model. This exemplar has been the model used to measure public hospitals and some private hospitals across Australia. Its development and refinement has occurred over thirty years.

The researcher was fortunate not only to be able to access the EQUIP model, but also to meet with the key people who introduced and developed the health accreditation process within Australia. They were able to explain and further elucidate aspects of the model that seemed unclear or excessively complicated.

The health sector’s EQUIP accreditation model was particularly relevant to this research project, both because of the similarities of the health sector to the funeral industry and because it was a working model in operation, with embedded quality standards.

3.3.3.5 Summary of Interviews with Senior Health Sector Officials

This section details findings from interviews with the two most senior officials from the health sector who were involved in the development of that sector’s accreditation process (see Table 3.1). The purpose of these interviews was to generate a comparison between an industry similar to the funeral industry and one which had already been through the process of accreditation. Table 3.1 summarises the responses of these senior officials and themes have been identified relating to how and what the funeral industry should be aware of concerning implementation of an accreditation model. Twelve questions were developed by the researcher with his supervisor as a means of examining the issues related to implementation of an accreditation process, as a basis of comparison with the funeral industry.
### Table 3.1: Summary of Responses of Senior Health Sector Officials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What was your background in the development of an accreditation model for hospitals within Australia?</td>
<td>Graduated as a nurse and then involved on Board of a large provincial hospital from 1965, which was the first hospital to be accredited in Australia. Felt we were doing a good job, but had nothing to measure it against. Later became President of ACHS during the 1990s. ACHS, which is now over 30 years old, has taken all that time to become a totally viable, independent and financially secure organisation. We were the third country in the world to implement accreditation and we examined the joint USA commission (JAYCO) as well as Canada. I knew all the people involved in the discussions about it and I joined ACHS as a Board Member in 1975.</td>
<td>Graduated as a doctor in 1969. Completed diploma of public health, fell into quality in 70s. Became quality manager at Concord Hospital – implemented theory in a practical way. Management supported making it part of an everyday culture, commitment from the top down. Original accreditation was very prescriptive. The EQUIP model is more patient-focussed but less directive – requires more leadership from within the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How would you explain what an accreditation model is? What are its purposes? How should it be evaluated?</td>
<td>It is a process where every level of a hospital is examined by peers from within the industry to ensure that a set of standards is met. It is now a continuous review focusing on improving what you are doing consistently. Accreditation was not simply about standards and safety, other valuable things happened within the program such as education and increasing the knowledge and capacity of people within the industry.</td>
<td>Accreditation has never been properly evaluated or researched. Everybody uses it but there is very little research into whether or not it really achieves what we’re saying it achieves. The point is to improve outcomes for your customer. The customer knows that this organisation has systems in place and will be accountable. It is difficult to prove that it works because we haven’t done randomised trials with controls but common sense will tell you it’s probably better than having things haphazard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I’ve been concerned about the lack of standards and the need to create a model to objectively measure standards. How did the health sector go about this? What was the time period?</td>
<td>The EQUIP model was completely different to what hospitals were accustomed to in past accreditation models; there were totally different standards, it was a move away from just processes, it centred on quality, safety and patient issues. We put a consumer representative on the Board and it focussed on what it was all about the patient. Accreditation should not be tied to Government funding, as it is better that it be voluntary for people to come into.</td>
<td>ACHS was established in 1974 and created standards that were updated over time that ultimately focussed on client outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. (a) What is lacking in the current model – how could it be improved?</td>
<td>(a) The original accreditation process in Australia was developed through the findings of a joint commission in Chicago (JAYCO). A man called Lionel</td>
<td>(a) Generic standards are open to interpretation and measurements can vary from survey to survey. We now have a list of elements under each criteria that are more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>Respondent B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 years (2020), what changes to the current model of accreditation do you foresee?</td>
<td>Wilson had a huge interest in using comparative data and also the quality of what happens in the health industry. Although the standards changed, the foundations of the earlier accreditation processes underpinned an understanding about addressing quality issues. They understood processes and then moved onto governance issues and a consumer focus. All these things are now basic requirements we had to bring into that EQUIP Program. Standards are constantly reviewed by ACHS, which is in turn itself reviewed by an international quality body. It's something that needs to be done slowly at first, as you have to write the standards before you can do anything. (b) Over the next 15 years there is a need to focus on a consolidated management of all health care under the direct control of the Commonwealth Government. There is currently enormous wastage and lack of accountability.</td>
<td>People say that there is too much documentation required but they have misinterpreted the requirements. We need to teach them what we are looking for. We need to continue to select, train and develop surveyors to minimise differences in evaluation between surveyors. (b) Increasing regulation of accreditation is not a good thing. People are less likely to maintain a continuous improvement approach if something is mandatory, they will do the minimum. There is also an increasing focus on accountability around technical standards which may come at the expense of organisation-wide accreditation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5. What were some of the politics/difficulties concerning implementing accreditation?                                                                                                            | When the EQUIP model was introduced there were difficulties as people were worried about the substantial requirements that came with the program, but now it’s completely embraced and supported by the industry.  
- Governance issues weren't strongly established in the early standards and only started to be addressed from the mid 1990s.  
- We were a small organisation under-resourced but we were far more powerful than we thought we were.  
By the mid 1990s ACHS had to change the accreditation program as it was running out of power, the costs were exorbitant and it wasn't working efficiently. We went to Canada to see how they were dealing with similar problems and came back with the thought that we'd start the EQUIP Program. We appointed a person with a medical background and this was the catalyst that meant the medical profession came on board.  
The hospitals fought the EQUIP | Most people supported the change but some people felt lost because they weren’t provided with much direction in how to apply the framework. Some organisations didn’t have appropriate leadership or commitment from leaders to the EQUIP model. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the main characteristics that make an organisation effective?</td>
<td>Either from the top down or the bottom up, there has to be a unity of purpose going forward and an understanding and commitment to the standards of quality that underpin the organisation. There has to be a clear vision of working together as a team that values all the components of the accreditation process.</td>
<td>Strong leadership. A framework is essential. A self-assessment gap analysis is critical as a foundation for any framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How is the model linked directly to organisational theory?</td>
<td>No, not at that stage, it was more about quality issues of clinical practice. The development of standards came from the operational level of the industry and were more about process and policy.</td>
<td>Not very well at all. A lot of standards are put in place without evidence behind them but that is quite similar to a lot of clinical practice. Over time we have worked at improving the credibility of our standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Why is COI used instead of targets/goals?</td>
<td>The present EQUIP Model is about continuous review and improvement which means that hospitals don’t get complacent and let their standards slip because they have received an accreditation certificate; they need to be ready for the next unexpected inspection. Comparative data is very important and there is now a program within EQUIP which compares the performance of the surveyors, so you’ve now got a level of consistency amongst the surveyors.</td>
<td>The two approaches are not mutually exclusive. You can achieve targets by using continuous quality improvement as a philosophy for the entire organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Has a blame-free culture been developed as a result of the EQUIP model?</td>
<td>No, the earlier accreditation processes underpinned a culture of CI based upon systems acknowledging there is always human error.</td>
<td>The blame-free culture has been around longer than the EQUIP model. We try and design systems where making errors is almost impossible because you have so many checks and balances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How were the mandatory criteria implemented and how was it received by the industry?</td>
<td>The accreditation model broke down a lot of business between the different levels. The medical staff didn’t like it at first, then we introduced a Clinical Indicator Program on how this could be compared across practitioners, it allowed for comparison of infection control results without identifying.</td>
<td>It was very well received by industry. 19 mandatory criteria were implemented in response to criticism from the Australian Council of Safety and Quality. There are also “moderate achievement” levels where organisations need to improve and will be given 60 days to meet requirements so that they don’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>Respondent B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hospitals. Regardless of the size of the hospital, the mandatory criteria need to be met, but there is probably some variation in some of the other criteria. It's harder to write the standards according to the size of organisations, but it's still quite manageable once they have been written.</td>
<td>miss out on accreditation altogether.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Why does the private health sector perform better than the public health sector overall? Is the model a top-down or bottom-up approach?</td>
<td>Accreditation is a good marketing tool for hospitals particularly in the private sector and is of reassurance for the consumer that quality standards are being met.</td>
<td>The private sector is reliant on income so have greater incentives to be customer focussed. Insurance companies also link their contracts to accreditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Should there be levels at which firms/organisations should be accredited? A tiered structure?</td>
<td>Doesn't believe in rating systems as they are very subjective. In the early stages of accreditation if you didn't pass you had to start all over again. Now if you're not accredited fully, you can receive a partial accreditation certificate. This is a fairer and more cost effective approach.</td>
<td>Accreditation has always been seen as sitting on top of licensing. A tiered structure is good. Originally there was a three-year full accreditation award. Now we have four-year full accreditation or two years with &quot;high priority recommendations&quot; to be followed up within 12 months. I think you do need to have different levels because that's all part of the continuous improvement process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4 The Draft Accreditation Model

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

The literature demonstrates that a multi-dimensional approach is needed to deal with the complexity that organisations face (see 2.4.2). Consequently, the researcher constructed an holistic model integrating each of the six key drivers that emerged from the literature. The researcher utilised his experience as a funeral service practitioner and the accreditation experience of the health sector in applying the six drivers over four standard funeral areas in model construction.

From an exploration of the underlying themes of accreditation, quality, evaluation frameworks and the drivers of organisational effectiveness, six key drivers emerged. These drivers constitute the six major pillars of the accreditation model. The literature reveals that issues related to quality and how it is measured should dominate the process of accreditation, with CQI emerging as the dominant strategy for ensuring accountability.
3.4.2 Six Drivers of Organisational Effectiveness

The construction of this provisional accreditation model has incorporated key concepts from evaluation frameworks, such as the BSC and the business excellence awards, which focussed on not only CQI but also other non-financial areas, such as the customer, employees and innovation. The value gained from exploring evaluation frameworks and their importance to the construction of the provisional accreditation model was that the measurement methods explained and discussed in the literature had been tested over a range of diverse industries. This acceptance across a range of diverse industries indicates their importance as a means of measurement of quality and standards. These frameworks identified leadership, information systems, continuous improvement, human resources and customer focus as crucial to quality and effectiveness. These specific drivers were also incorporated in the construction of the model. The literature indicated that measurement and monitoring was needed in all these areas, not just the financial area, for organisations to become and to remain effective.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the six key drivers that contribute to organisational effectiveness. The organisational literature provides evidence of six key drivers which allow organisations to deliver organisational outcomes and provide evidence of organisational effectiveness. These drivers are:

1. Leadership
2. Human Resources
3. Quality
4. Information Systems
5. Compliance
6. Innovation and Change

The task the researcher was required to undertake was to build each of these six key drivers into the provisional model. The challenge was to identify various elements of the real world, as understood by the expert funeral service practitioners and build them into each of the six key drivers. This was achieved in three different ways through the interview process with the expert panel.

1. Elements were selected from exemplars from the health sector, which were the most relevant to the funeral industry.
2. Elements were extracted from exemplars defined by industry and educational experts, working together with senior industry representatives from the funeral industry.

3. Elements were derived from in-depth interviews with senior members of the funeral industry, wherein the relevance of aspects of the provisional model were discussed, debated and the inclusion of each of the elements of the six key drivers was ratified by the interviewees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driver 1</th>
<th>Leadership Elements</th>
<th>Driver 2</th>
<th>Human Resources Elements</th>
<th>Driver 3</th>
<th>Quality Elements</th>
<th>Driver 4</th>
<th>Information Systems Elements</th>
<th>Driver 5</th>
<th>Compliance Elements</th>
<th>Driver 6</th>
<th>Innovation &amp; Change Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>Systems evaluated regularly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Managing Risks</td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on continuous improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance Management Systems</td>
<td>Systems Approach</td>
<td>Timely and accurate information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing research of customer needs is conducted to identify opportunities for change and improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Establishm ent of Policies and Procedures</td>
<td>Measurem ent analysis of systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational strategy and plans regularly monitored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Processes and Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transparen t Reward System</td>
<td>Codes of Practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work Design &amp; Structure</td>
<td>Benchmarking of External standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measurem ent and analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff Selection Processes</td>
<td>Complaints analyses and improvements made to systems as required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Education &amp; Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HRM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manageme nt Succession Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complianc e revisal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quality Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance revisal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>Systems evaluated regularly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance revisal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes = Organisational Effectiveness

Figure 3.2: Six Key Drivers that Contribute to Organisational Effectiveness
Underlying each of the four standards is a strong emphasis upon Planning & Leadership. The leadership group within the organisational structure needs to establish appropriate policies and procedures that will impact effectively on the operations of the company. It is important that operational staff are provided with appropriate resources, together with appropriate education and training.

The Human Resources (HR) driver places importance on a focus to support the provision of quality client services to meet the strategic aims of the organisation. Eskildsen et al. (2004) support the inclusion of human resources as one of the six drivers leading to organisational effectiveness, as they consider that effective HR is becoming a primary concern for organisations striving for business success. To ensure this customer satisfaction, employees need to be trained and selected to deliver the type of service the customer expects. The strategy of the firm needs to be aligned to employees in relation to training, reward and performance management. This leads to committed employees, which in turn leads to strong financial returns, as outlined by Egan (1993).

Quality was the third driver of organisational effectiveness as identified by the literature and was measured across all four funeral standards within the accreditation model. Perrott (2002) detailed how an emphasis on continuous quality management (CQM) had yielded significant strategic results. An amalgam of ideas around the sequestering of resources for quality improvement has generated useful perspectives about accreditation. When firms within an industry are similar and there is little information to distinguish performance, poor practices can damage the reputation of the industry.

The fourth driver of organisational effectiveness, Information Systems, identified the need for effective and efficient management being dependent on timely and accurate information. This driver helps support organisational performance and funeral service delivery. Organisations need to continuously improve their management of data and information to ascertain whether it is effective and efficient. Karmarkar (2004) supports the inclusion of information technology in his article about surviving the services revolution, by stating that the primary change driver is technology.

Compliance is the fifth driver of organisational effectiveness, particularly from a risk management perspective, underpinning issues particularly around infection control practices and OHS and manual handling techniques.
Innovation and Change, driver six, can add value to a business by improving its range of services or products. Egan (1993) refers to innovation as initiated change for further improving the effectiveness and business practices of a firm. This focus ensures that the organisation is constantly reviewing the way it operates, with an emphasis on continuous improvement across the organisation. The accreditation model recognises the importance that culture has in embedding change and innovation, which was an underpinning characteristic in the construction of the accreditation model.

Failure to recognise the organisational changes required to adapt to a new business approach hinders long-term viability. The development of the funeral accreditation model is important, as it specifically highlights innovation and change as one of six characteristics that need to be integrated holistically. The literature indicates that this leads to long-term organisational effectiveness. The goal of transformation is to enhance performance by improving standards. Creating behavioural change is a difficult and long-term process that requires a concerted and persistent effort from management. In implementing any quality management system an organisation needs to transform itself to one that is flexible, adaptive, innovative, responsive and value-adding. The development of the provisional accreditation model reflects this transformational process.

Innovation and change were included in the accreditation model in response to the research methods and approach applied by Nohria et al. (2003). Their research, in a ten-year longitudinal study, is impressively objective and well-founded. This study strongly supported the inclusion of innovation and change as a key driver of organisational effectiveness.

Funeral firms that can adapt rapidly to their changing customer base and a shift from the traditional funeral will be those best placed to be effective and profitable in the future. The firms that have the ability to confront this change and create the future by adapting rapidly will be the firms that survive and prosper. This point is supported by Hubbard et al. (2002), Collins (2001) and Collins and Porras (1994).

Funeral firms of the future need to adapt rapidly to change, as it impacts on areas such as strategy, selection of staff, working conditions, remuneration, supplier relationships, advertising and communication strategies. Egan (1993) pointed out that for this to happen, firms must be interested in change, managers must be empowered to initiate change and the tools of change must be available to employees. Each of these areas is incorporated within the provisional accreditation model.
Table 3.2: Example of Health Sector Five-Tier Measurement Rating System (The ACHS EQUIP4 Accreditation Guide: 4th edn., 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>LA-Awareness</th>
<th>SA-Implementation (LA plus the following)</th>
<th>MA-Evaluation (SA plus the following)</th>
<th>EA-Benchmarking (MA plus the following)</th>
<th>OA-Leader (EA plus the following)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 The organisation provides quality, safe care through the planning and development of services and its pro-active response to internal and external challenges.</td>
<td>(a) Strategic planning exists only as an informal process. (b) There is a planned approach to the development of facilities and services. (c) There is limited communication with staff on planned changes. (d) There is an awareness of the need to develop relationships with relevant organisations and communities to achieve organisational and strategic goals.</td>
<td>(a) A strategic plan exists but it is not linked to the operational plan. (b) Organisational service planning is in accordance with corporate objectives. (c) Stakeholders, including staff, are involved in the development of plans. (d) Planned changes are clearly communicated to staff. (e) Formal relationships with relevant external organisations exist.</td>
<td>(a) Strategic and operational plans are integrated and reflect the role of the organisation. (b) Clinical and non-clinical service planning reflects projected service demands. (c) The governing body monitors achievement of plans and takes action to address improvement. (d) Organisational changes are evaluated in consultation with all stakeholders.</td>
<td>(a) The process of service planning and development is compared with external systems and improvements are made, as required.</td>
<td>(a) The organisation demonstrates it is a leader by the success of its services and pro-active response to internal and external challenges.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.3 Four-Tier Rating Measurement System

The researcher’s provisional model adopts a four-tier rating measurement system applied across each of the six key drivers of organisational effectiveness and assessed against a four-tier rating system of Awareness, Implementation, Evaluation and Best Practice (see Figure 3.3).

This four-tier measurement system draws heavily upon the experiences of the health sector. The EQUIP model has a five-tier scale against which standards were measured (see Table 3.2). The health sector’s five tiers in ‘low-to-high’ sequence are:

- Awareness
This example of the health sector’s EQUIP accreditation model shows how the health sector has applied a five-tier rating system of Awareness, Implementation, Evaluation, Benchmarking and Leader against one of its quality standards.

The researcher’s provisional model differs from the EQUIP model in the reduction of measurement systems from five to four. The fact that the health sector has had a thirty year history of accreditation and the realisation that the grading system had been seen to be established and working well in practice, influenced the researcher’s decision to adopt a similar grading measurement system. The four-tier grading measurement system created a structure for a multi-dimensional approach to performance management that accommodates reasonable variation.

The four-tier grading matrix assumes an expected improved performance for each measure, over each of the six drivers of organisational effectiveness. Each level has mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness in aspects of each of the drivers, by using evidence-based approaches. This grading matrix creates a formal expectation for specific improvement in areas that had not been articulated or standardised within the funeral industry to date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Planning and Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Human Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Information Systems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Compliance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Innovation and Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.3: Four-Tier Measurement Rating System – Across the six drivers of organisational effectiveness (i.e. 6x4)**

Tier one, Awareness, focuses on compliance as being important, particularly in the initial stages of the accreditation process. In the early phases of the implementation of the model, delineation of the threshold about the level may be less rigid. This may be because organisations are growing towards a higher degree of fit and compliance of benchmarks. This
process may take some time, so some latitude may have to be given by the surveyors in the early phases of the implementation of the model.

Tier two, Implementation, recognises that these is adherence and awareness of management systems. It is likely that when the accreditation process becomes embedded within the industry that the minimum cut-off level for organisations to be accreditable may be level two. This would indicate that higher levels of compliance are being reached and higher standards of performance required to be accredited.

Tier three, Evaluation, requires organisations to review their systems and procedures on a regular basis to ensure that standards are being monitored and met.

Tier four, Best Practice, requires organisations to benchmark their practices against both internal and external comparison organisations. This focus on best practice recognises the importance for organisations of striving for excellence and continued improvement, with concentration on a best practice philosophy.

The need to develop a best practice assessment component across all four standards within the accreditation model is also supported strongly by the literature. Van der Wiele & Brown (2002), Ovretveit (1997) and Calingo (1996) all refer to the need for quality to be benchmarked across competitors in the industry, as well as comparisons made with other industries. Similarly, De Velle (2004) argued that many organisations benchmark to compare their own processes to similar processes of other successful organisations. The search for best practice for competitive advantage leads to superior performance by organisations.

The Four Funeral Standards

The four funeral standards (see Figure 3.4) are derived from the health sector’s EQUIP model and the responses of the interviewees on the expert panel. An insider knowledge of the funeral industry allowed the researcher to create a cluster of business elements that were workable and practicable. The researcher clustered elements and aspects of business that had common elements to arrive at four standards that were logical and understandable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 1</th>
<th>Standard 2</th>
<th>Standard 3</th>
<th>Standard 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Systems</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Risk Management</td>
<td>Client Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1 Management</strong></td>
<td>2. Transfers</td>
<td>3.1 Monitor Performance</td>
<td>4.1 The Funeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Structure</td>
<td>2.1 Transfers</td>
<td>Approve Business Plan; budget and policies</td>
<td>Funeral commencement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Home / Nursing Home / Hospital / Coroner</td>
<td>Understand and protect the firm’s financial position</td>
<td>Family liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Interstate / International</td>
<td></td>
<td>Service participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coffin movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-standard funerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2 Finance</strong></td>
<td>2. Mortuary</td>
<td>3.2 Monitor Risks</td>
<td>Exhumation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart of accounts</td>
<td>Documentation &amp; ID Procedures</td>
<td>Establish systems to monitor legal and regulatory compliance</td>
<td>Bereavement support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Establish system of internal controls</td>
<td>Client functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial statements</td>
<td>room / ventilation / equipment</td>
<td>Loss of key management due to Health / Death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash management</td>
<td>body preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Media Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business controls</td>
<td>embalming / dressing / final preparation / encoffining</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bankruptcy / Insolvency / Fraud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3 Marketing</strong></td>
<td>2.3 Co-ordination of Funeral Arrangements</td>
<td>3.3 Monitor Finances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Staff resource allocation</td>
<td>Ensure legal payments complied, i.e., tax, Super, Workcare Insurances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations</td>
<td>arranging / conducting/funeral assistants</td>
<td>- Building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>daily running sheets &amp; management reports</td>
<td>- Public liability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4 Merchandising</strong></td>
<td>Service delivery</td>
<td>- Professional indemnity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.5 Prepaid Funerals</strong></td>
<td>education and training viewings</td>
<td>- Key man insurance and succession planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prayer services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chapel / church / cremation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffin Preparation &amp; Stock Control trim procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>engraving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ID procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ordering, receiving &amp; storage of supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maintenance and procurement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vehicles fleet management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maintenance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.4: The Four Funeral Industry Standards
The four funeral standards were adopted from various literature sources (see Chapter Two). Standard One, Business Systems, incorporates five specific areas of business: Management, Finance, Marketing, Merchandising and Prepaid funerals. A key element of this standard is Management. Effective funeral firms should have a clear and concise strategy, with clearly articulated short- and long-term goals. Therefore, the operating management systems should be closely aligned to the strategy to ensure maximum effectiveness. The literature supports the specific inclusion of areas such as organisational structure, strategy, human resources, information technology and governance with the management standard. The four-tier measurement rating system, together with the six drivers of organisational effectiveness, is applied to each and every one of these indicators of the five divisions of business success.

The Finance area covers functions such as financial statements, cash flow management, budgets and business controls. What is identified is that appropriate pricing strategies in relation to market conditions need to meet the profit targets of the business. Budget targets are selected to enable ongoing monitoring of financial performance.

The Marketing heading covers functions such as strategy, public relations and advertising. This identifies that the development of a business plan needs to provide for finance and the provision of services to facilitate the business goals and objectives. The marketing and promotion strategies identify methods to promote market exposure of the business in accordance with the business goals and objectives. Ongoing research into new business opportunities enables business goals and objectives to be adjusted as new business opportunities arise. The ability to implement and monitor the marketing strategy and plans optimises the chances of business success. Merchandising of funeral-related products and pre-paid funeral marketing and administration make up the remaining areas of Business Systems in Standard One.

Standard Two applies to operations and relates to the delivery of service to the client family. This standard relates to the delivery of funeral service provision in areas such as premises, vehicles and equipment that need to be in place to deliver effective funeral service to the customer. The construction of the provisional accreditation model supports the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of areas including arranging and conducting funerals, stock control, information systems, technology, funeral staffing and co-ordination.

Hubbard et al. (2002) and Artto and Hawk (1999) support risk management (Standard Three) by acknowledging that customer orientation is important as a means of managing risk. This
standard concentrates specifically on monitoring performance, risks and finances. The intent of this standard and its criteria is the implementation of risk management principles including the development of an organisation-wide risk management policy and risk management systems. This standard links closely with the business systems standard and addresses the importance of being able to manage risk by monitoring performance and finances and compliance with legislative requirements.

The importance of managing risk is crucial to the survival of business and the impact these risks can have on the business needs to be regularly received by management. The financial plan identifies sources and costs of finance to provide required liquidity and profitability for the business. Crisis management strategies that identify responses to critical incidental issues that can impact on financial viability such as insolvency, fraud, bankruptcy and other matters including sudden or serious injuries to key senior staff are identified. A media strategy for dealing with unexpected or pervasive damage to the business is included in this standard.

Standard Four focuses specifically on the customer experience and incorporates the arrangement and documentation of the funeral and the funeral itself. The intent of this standard and its criteria is on the delivery of appropriate service levels meeting the needs of client families. Once again the underlying emphasis is on planning and leadership. Systems and resources are designed to be in place to ensure that client families’ funeral service needs are accurately identified and delivered to their expectations. The Human Resources function is structured to ensure that staff are selected who have organisational, time and stress management skills, as well as personal integrity and ethics and an awareness of the various social, cultural and religious considerations.

The researcher utilised the BSC concepts together with Egan’s (1993) and Kilmann’s (1984) findings to identify the critical drivers for success for funeral service providers. The BSC’s practical use as an evaluation framework is to provide a focus on where the organisation is heading in the future, by providing a strategic road map, with accountability and success indicators linked to strategy and vision. The funeral service accreditation model incorporates these assumptions.

In summary, Kaplan and Norton’s (1992) Balanced Scorecard and the draft accreditation model have four key benefits in that they

- Minimise information overload by limiting the number of measures used;
- Force managers to focus on the most critical issues;
• Bring together a single management report focusing on long term issues; and
• Force managers to examine all four perspectives together, to see whether improvement in one area is achieved at the expense of another.

The importance of changing customer expectations should drive the development of strategy in all funeral organisations. Funeral directors are now being confronted by baby boomer clients, who are better educated and more questioning about rituals and want value for money (Wolfelt, 2001). Today’s consumers want to create more meaningful and authentic funeral experiences. They want information and education about the types of choices that meet their individual needs and circumstances. Similarly, these clients are more likely to use technology to inform their choice of funeral firms. Funeral consumers today are not just buying a product, they are being sold an experience. The construction of the provisional accreditation model accommodates these expectations. Funeral firms that change their processes and move to this paradigm are likely to be the successful and effective funeral firms of the future.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the development of a funeral accreditation model. An overview of the resources applied in the construction of the provisional model explains their influence. Figure 3.5 illustrates the 4x6x4 Accreditation Framework.

In the construction of the accreditation model, the researcher recognised the importance of measuring performance and embedding organisational change within the funeral industry, based around issues of quality and customer satisfaction levels. The quality of funeral service provision focuses upon evaluation procedures and benchmarking against other firms within the industry, to identify aspects that can be further improved. The provisional funeral accreditation model should enable owner/managers to quickly monitor a range of tasks that need to be managed to ensure that risk factors are minimised or eliminated. This monitoring process should improve overall effectiveness for funeral firms of all sizes and geographic locations and is strongly supported by the literature review and the findings of the interviews.

Drawing on the literature of model building (see Chapter Two), the researcher filtered the health sector and funeral industry information for examples, checking the degree of fit:

• To ensure language that could be understood easily by the practitioners; and
• To confirm that content was acceptable and suitable for practitioners of the funeral industry.

Having established the components for inclusion in the provisional model, the researcher then described how they were organised and refined to create the provisional model instrument. This model was ratified by the funeral industry expert panel, through a series of interviews that validated the areas of activities as well as the wording and arranging of the different elements of the model.

The next chapter focuses on the types of methodologies and methods utilised to inform the empirical component of this research project.
**Figure 3.5: 4x6x4 Accreditation Framework**

Note: For each of the Four Funeral Industry Standards (i.e., Business Systems, Operations, Risk Management and Client Management) benchmarking indices are set out in a matrix format. The horizontal row is represented by the four-tier rating system and the vertical columns are comprised of the six drivers of organisational effectiveness. The former is derived from the EQUIP exemplar and the latter emerges from the literature about organisational effectiveness. The four funeral industry standards are each measured across the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four Funeral Industry Standards</th>
<th>Six Drivers of Organisational Effectiveness</th>
<th>Four-Tier Measurement Rating System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Operations</td>
<td>2. Human Resources</td>
<td>2. Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Compliance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Innovation and Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this research is to develop and refine an accreditation model for funeral firms in Victoria. The first stage of the research included a provisional version of this model. This was developed by the researcher based primarily upon an in-depth literature search and his extensive experience as a funeral director. The research sets out to build upon what is already known and to contextualise general knowledge about accreditation and organisational effectiveness, by utilising the specific insights of industry experts. This detailed understanding forms the evidence base for the second stage of the accreditation model for funeral firms in Victoria.

The provisional model was then evaluated and improved by presenting it to members of an expert panel and using their insights as a lens onto the organisational and social realities of the funeral industry. Specifically the research demonstrates that it is possible to develop an instrument that can measure standards for the funeral industry.

This chapter explains the rationale for the selection of the research methodology, the research paradigm, the research approach, the research strategy, the interview process and data generation and analysis. It also discusses ethical considerations and issues concerning research rigour, validity and reliability.

The research is predicated upon adoption of the Realist Paradigm which, according to Stiles (2003) and May (1993), ontologically and epistemologically reflects the middle ground between Positivism and Interpretivism. The Realist Paradigm has the capacity to foreground the organisational world. This approach was chosen because it was understood and experienced by members of the funeral industry within Victoria. Utilising the Licensing Committee as an expert group of informants allows for in-depth qualitative research through the participation of peer experts. Also, the researcher’s experience and familiarity with the issues of the industry help contribute to the success of utilising a qualitative approach.
Interviews conducted with funeral industry experts provide informed opinion about standards and how they should be measured within the industry. Open-ended questions are posed (see 4.4.3.3) and each member is encouraged to be involved in the discussions.

The advantage of utilising Committee Members as an expert panel lay in their extensive industry experience and the maturation of the group around the process of licensing. Group members had developed a shared understanding of terms, issues and group dynamics that assisted them in critiquing a draft accreditation model. The prior issue of licensing is helpful to this research project in that it has shaped and informed the thinking of senior members of the industry. This thinking, together with this thesis, has accelerated the development of accreditation as a logical next step post-licensing.

The provisional model was informed by an extensive search of the available literature on organisational theory. The internal expert panel was interviewed about their reaction to the provisional model and as a consequence the provisional accreditation model was reviewed and revised.

Concurrent with the development of the provisional accreditation model separate interviews were conducted with a different group of senior AFDA members about current trends and attitudes to accreditation. The rigour of the model was further enriched through information derived from external experts in the health sector (see Chapter One).

4.2 The Research Paradigm: Realism

In explaining Realism as a research paradigm, it is useful to contrast it with Positivism and Interpretivism. Positivists seek to separate themselves from the world they study and to quantitatively measure independent facts about a single reality in an objective and scientific way. According to Everard and Louis (1991), Positivist research reflects an epistemological belief in an external entity constituted of facts that are structured in a law-like manner. In contrast, Interpretivists assume that each social situation is radically different, that there are several subjective realities (Healy & Perry, 2000; Stiles, 2003), and that consequently the social world is constructed from the interpretation of the people within it. Advocates of this paradigm develop meaning from the perspectives of the participants and generally use a qualitative approach to data collection and interpretation.
Realism, however, takes the middle ground. It acknowledges the Interpretivist argument that people’s understanding of the social world affects their behaviour and that an insider understanding of that knowledge is important. However, the critical point is that a Realist considers that these understandings may be partial or incomplete. Realism therefore encourages a methodological approach that favours mixed methods to construct validity, such as the use of prior theory, case study interviews and observations. Realist research seeks to integrate the subjective with the objective.

Bhaskar (1989) explains the philosophy that underlies Realism methodology where: the social world, unlike the laboratory experiment, is an open system, where explanation and understanding are more or less possible, but law-like prediction is impossible.

4.3 Case Study Approach

A case study approach involves a single unit of analysis, in this case, the funeral industry, and involves gathering detailed information about the unit of analysis, over a period of time, with a view to obtaining in-depth knowledge. Otley and Berry (1994) discuss case studies that arise by chance and circumstance. The inquiry into the funeral industry in Victoria was one such circumstance that allowed the researcher access and opportunity to examine a situation and develop an accreditation model in the process. This case study has been based on the integration of existing theory, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data.

Yin (1994) suggests that the analysis of case study information is one of the most difficult aspects methodologically. Case studies require several data collection methods, the results of which converge, in order to establish construct validity. Yin (1994) identified some of these methods as including:

- direct observation of activities and phenomena and their environment;
- interviews – structured or unstructured; and
- documentation, such as written, printed or electronic information about the company and its operations and newspaper cuttings.

There are difficulties in analysing qualitative data, including the necessity to filter or discard large amounts of data during analysis. The inclusion/exclusion criteria for data filtering in this study included thematic relevance, consistency with the literature and inferences, the relevance of which appeared clear to the researcher as a peer.
Yin (1994) also identifies five stages of case study research:

- Selecting your case
- Preliminary investigations
- Data stage
- Analysis stage
- Report stage

He argues that case study research is not just a narrative account of an event, but also involves analysis against an appropriate theoretical framework. Yin (1989) suggested three major criticisms of case studies, which are discussed in further detail in this chapter and again in Chapter Six:

1. There is the possibility of sloppy research and biased findings being presented;
2. Findings are not useful for generalising; and
3. A case study can take too long and produce unmanageable amounts of data.

4.4 Research Design

4.4.1 Overview

4.4.1.1 Introduction

Healy and Perry (2000) present six criteria to judge the validity and reliability of qualitative research within the Realism paradigm (see Table 4.1).

The first two criteria concern ontology, that is, ontological appropriateness and contingent validity. The third criterion concerns epistemology: multiple perceptions of participants and of peer researchers. The final three criteria concern methodology: methodological trustworthiness, analytic generalisation and construct validity. Realism adopts the interpretivist position that there are fundamental differences between natural and social phenomena, so Realism develops different methods to interpretivism for understanding the social reality of situations.

According to Healy and Perry (2000), paradigms are conceptual frameworks and sets of linked assumptions about the world that are shared by a community of scientists investigating the world. There are three elements of a paradigm:
• Ontology – the reality that researchers investigate;
• Epistemology – the relationship between that reality and the researcher; and
• Methodology – the technique used by the researcher to investigate that reality.

The ontology of Realism assumes that the research is dealing with complex social phenomena involving reflective people; in Popper’s (1959) terms, this reality consists of the independent creations of the minds of living creatures, that is, it is “the world of ideas, art, science, language, ethics and institutions”. In contrast, Positivism operates in the objective world and constructivism operates in the subjective world. Table 4.1 summarises the six criteria recommended by Healy and Perry (2000) for case study research based on the Realist paradigm.

1. Ontology – The first criterion is ontological appropriateness.

2. Ontology – Contingent Validity Realism research discovers knowledge of the real world by naming and describing broad, generative mechanisms that operate in the world. This second criterion explores validity in relation to generative mechanisms and the contexts within which they are contingent.

3. Epistemology – Realists accept there is a real world to discover, even if it is only imperfectly apprehensible. Realism relies on multiple perceptions of a single reality. These multiple perceptions involve triangulations of several data sources.

4. Methodology – This criterion refers to the extent to which the research can be audited by developing a case study database and by the use of quotations and interpretations.

5. Methodology – Analytic Generalisation. Refers to part of theory building in which the case study needs to identify research issues before data collection, in order to formulate an interview protocol that will provide data for supporting or questioning existing theory.

6. Methodology – Construct Validity. Refers to how well information about the constructs in the theory being built are measured in the research.

The researcher took the approach of a case study technique, within a Realist paradigm. This is illustrated in column three of Table 4.1, covering the application of case study techniques within a Realist paradigm. The researcher addressed each of the six criteria as follows:

1. The project research design has a high degree of fit with the research problem The investigator is a funeral director well prepared for the role as a participant observer
(see 4.4.1.3) to assist him understand and interpret the real world of his colleagues in the field.

2. The researcher extended the development of the probes that are derived from the central research project, i.e., can an accreditation model be developed for the funeral industry. Questions were then posed to the respondents.

3. The researcher examined the responses of the interviewees that were central to the research question, compared the responses and after analysing these aspects thematically, clustered them into applicable themes.

4. The interviews were systematic and similar approaches were made to each of the participants. The questions were identified and the researcher left open the possibility of in-depth follow-up questions that arose, or that were posed to get clarification of responses that were unclear, to exhaust the issue in a systematic manner. This process allowed the researcher to later review and analyse the transcripts.

5. The researcher identified issues before interviewing in a variety of ways:
   - Examined existing exemplars;
   - Reviewed the literature;
   - Sought to obtain industry standards; and
   - Conducted a preliminary series of interviews with a select group of representatives from the funeral industry.

6. The researcher pulled together insights from the literature about human services industries (i.e., health sector) and from two clusters of funeral industry interviews. A comparison was made of anticipated responses with actual responses from the interviewees to identify fit or lack of fit with the literature.

It was noted that the criteria of case study research had a high degree of fit, as did columns 5, 6 and 7 in Table 4.1, being the criteria for naturalist, qualitative and positivist research. However, and for the reasons stated, the case study method was the preferred paradigm.
Table 4.1: Quality Criteria for Case Study Research Within the Realism Paradigm and Other Research Criteria (Adapted from Healy & Perry, 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developed for this research project</th>
<th>Brief description of criteria for this realist research</th>
<th>Case study techniques within this realist paradigm</th>
<th>Criteria for case study research</th>
<th>Criteria for constructivist or naturalist research</th>
<th>Criteria for qualitative research</th>
<th>Criteria for positivist research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ontological appropriateness</em></td>
<td>Research problem deals with complex social science phenomena involving reflective people (world 3 in Magee (1985))</td>
<td>Selection of research problem, for example, it is a how and why problem</td>
<td>(World 2 in Magee (1985))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Contingent validity</em></td>
<td>Open ‘fuzzy boundary’ systems (Yin, 1994) involving generative mechanisms rather than direct cause-and-effect</td>
<td>Theoretical and literal replication, in-depth questions, emphasis on why’ issues, description of the context of the cases</td>
<td>Internal validity</td>
<td>‘Truth value’ or credibility</td>
<td>Internal validity / credibility/ Authenticity</td>
<td>Internal validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Multiple perceptions of participants and peer researchers</em></td>
<td>Neither value-free nor value laden, rather value-aware</td>
<td>Multiple interviews, supporting evidence, broad questions before probes, triangulation, Self-description and awareness of own values. Published reports for peer review</td>
<td>Neutrality or conformability</td>
<td>Objectivity/conformability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Methodological trustworthiness</em></td>
<td>Trustworthy – the research can be audited</td>
<td>Case-study database, use in the report of relevant quotations and matrices that summarise data and of descriptions of procedures like case selection and interview procedures</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Consistency or dependability</td>
<td>Reliability/dependability/ audibility</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Analytic generalisation</em></td>
<td>Analytic generalisation (that is, theory building) rather than statistical generalisation (that is, theory testing)</td>
<td>Identify research issues before data collection, to formulate an interview protocol that will provide data for confirming or disconfirming theory</td>
<td>External validity through the specification of theoretical relationships, from which generalisations can be made</td>
<td>Applicability or transferability</td>
<td>External validity / transferability / fittingness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Construct validity</em></td>
<td>Use of prior theory, case study database, triangulation</td>
<td>Construct validity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Construct validity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.4.1.2 Management of Bias

Yin (1989) stated that one of the greatest concerns with case studies is the possibility of biased findings being presented. The researcher is acutely aware of the potential for bias in his role as a senior industry participant observer and thus as interviewer potentially influencing the interview participants. The researcher is also aware of his own views about where the funeral industry should be heading and sensitive to the need to maintain an objective stance.

Concerns about potential bias ensured that the interview questions were open-ended so as to reduce the possibility of asking leading questions. This process involved extensive discussion with his supervisor and industry mentor, as well as trialling the interview process with two senior industry figures not involved with the expert panel. Researcher bias issues were also discussed with the supervisor on an ongoing basis, both prior to and during the research project. Validity was enhanced by recording the interviews and producing complete transcripts of them, along with conducting a triangulation by collecting data from a diverse range of individuals within the funeral and health sectors.

4.4.1.3 Participant Observation

The role of participant observer allows the researcher the opportunity to gain access to Victoria’s leading funeral practitioners and conduct exploratory research in the form of an industry case study. Yin (1989) and Otley and Berry (1994) discuss case studies that arise by chance and circumstance. The researcher’s role as an active participant of the Licensing Committee was this chance and circumstance that provided the opportunity to leverage off the licensing issue and develop a provisional accreditation model in the subsequent process.

Status in the industry provides the researcher with opportunities for gaining access to professional experts who are peers for collecting case study data. According to Yin (1994), these opportunities include the ability to view industry and organisational reality as an internal rather than an external observer, and the ability to gain access to groups that are not accessible to external researchers. This study benefited from open and candid discussion.

The Licensing Committee developed a shared understanding of terms, issues and group dynamics that assisted them in critiquing the provisional accreditation model. Interviews elicited informed opinion from the group about desirable standards and how they should be
measured within the industry. Open-ended questions were posed and each member was encouraged to engage in discussions.

The two-part interview process gave the researcher a means of examining the provisional model against the shared responses and insights of industry experts. These two sets of semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method of obtaining a detailed, in-depth understanding from funeral service practitioners of what the key characteristics of the industry in Victoria are and should be.

Ease of access and social relationships between the researcher and participants through previous encounters within the industry helped in the meaningfulness and accuracy of the data. However, the situation increased the potential of researcher bias (Yin, 1994). In order to ensure reliability of the findings and reduce research bias, the researcher employed four different strategies:

1. Panel members were given a typed copy of the transcript of the interview and requested to validate its accuracy;

2. The interview questions and process were discussed with external senior colleagues within the funeral industry and the researcher’s supervisor;

3. Where pertinent, verbatim answers from panel members were included in the report; and

4. Existing literature was compared to and contrasted with the views of the interviewees.

4.4.1.4 Ethical Considerations

This research project has followed the RMIT Business Ethical Procedures and has been approved by the RMIT Business Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee, which classified the project as a Category 1 – No Risk (see Appendix Two). Blaikie (2003) states that it has become normal practice for the ethical implications of a social research project to be made explicit, together with the procedures to be used to deal with them.

The names of the expert panel and health sector respondents are reported by pseudonyms in a manner that will not enable the participants to be identified. Background notes and similar material will be stored in a safe area for a period of seven years and will only be accessible to the researcher and his supervisor. After this time the data will be destroyed according to NHMRC guidelines.
4.4.1.5 Fully Informed Consent

Participants were all members of the Funeral Industry Licensing Committee and well known to the researcher and consequently it was easy to obtain their cooperation to recruit them to the panel. A phone call requesting the participants’ permission to join the expert panel was followed up by a letter thanking them for agreeing to participate, a draft of the provisional accreditation model and the anticipated date of the two scheduled interviews. A letter on RMIT letterhead was also attached (see Appendix Two). This letter explained the purpose of the research, the time commitments involved, the confidentiality of the interviews and that the results may appear in academic and other publications.

Interviews commenced with the researcher:

- explaining the purpose of the research;
- explaining the process of the interviews;
- advising the informants of the need to tape the transcript of the interviews;
- reminding the participants of the anonymity and confidentiality of the information; and
- advising them that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time from the process.

When the informants had been fully informed, they were asked to sign a letter of consent, so that the formal interviews could commence. At the conclusion of the interviews, typed transcripts were sent to all the participants seeking confirmation that their comments were a true and correct record and represented their views of the questions that were asked. All informants returned their transcripts to the researcher without any corrections being required.

4.4.2 Research Objectives and Method

4.4.2.1 Research Objectives

The main purpose of this project is to use an exploration of the literature on organisational effectiveness, in conjunction with an exploration of the view of expert practitioners, to construct an accreditation model aimed at ensuring high quality funeral service provision. Central to pursuing the above objectives was that the researcher develop clear, consistent and
measurable industry standards that are relevant to the delivery of effective, high quality funeral service provision.

The Australian Funeral Directors Association (AFDA) Licensing Committee developed a policy on licensing to submit to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Regulation of the Funeral Industry, which accelerated the development of accreditation for the industry.

The researcher’s role as a participant on the Committee allowed him to leverage off the Committee findings and utilise the expertise of members as a reference group, to explore those characteristics that make funeral firms organisationally effective and how these characteristics can be included in the construction of an accreditation model.

### 4.4.2.2 Research Questions

This research project addresses the question, “What are the major characteristics and challenges facing funeral service providers that should drive an accreditation model for funeral firms in Victoria?”

The research project adopted an abductive approach, (see 4.4.2.3) which explored and attempted to generate an in-depth understanding of the social reality of the funeral practitioner. According to Blaikie (2003), this abductive approach is suited to answering “what” and “why” questions such as those asked by this research project.

A case study research strategy was adopted, which involves gathering ‘thick’ data with a view to obtaining in-depth knowledge. Figure 4.1 shows the ‘flow’ of the process from the research questions through to the research outcome. A provisional accreditation model is constructed and is refined through the process of interviews, data collection, data analysis and data confirmation. The research process from the point of conceptualisation of the project to the outcome is outlined in Figure 4.1.
4.4.2.3 Research Strategy

Blaikie (2003) states that abductive strategy involves constructing theory that is grounded in everyday activities and in the language and meanings of social actors. It has two stages:

- Describing these activities and meanings; and
- Deriving categories and concepts that can form the basis of an understanding or an explanation of the problem at hand.
Abductive research strategy follows from ontological assumptions that attend to reality as the construction of actors within a social context. This view rejects the notion that there may be a single social reality, but rather it is more likely that there are changing social realities. The research question indicates that an abductive research strategy should be applied. By taking an insider view as a participant observer, an endeavour was made to discover and understand the mutual perceptions, symbolic meanings, motives and rules that make up the funeral industry, in the expectation that these motives and perceptions could usefully inform the construction of an effective accreditation model for the funeral industry. These three concepts were utilised in Chapter Five as a means of analysing the findings of this research project.

This study commences by conducting a series of two focus group interviews with the expert panel. The aim was to understand the views of expert practitioners on what drives organisational effectiveness within funeral homes and how this could lead to the development of an accreditation model. All interviews were taped and transcribed with the consent of the participants.

4.4.3 Interviews

4.4.3.1 Rationale for Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method of obtaining a detailed in-depth understanding from funeral service practitioners of the key effectiveness drivers for the funeral industry in Victoria. This process was chosen as the primary data collection method, as the order of the questions could vary, dependent upon the issues arising from the comments of the panel members. This approach also provided the opportunity to probe the respondents’ answers at the time of asking the questions. This method was considered appropriate as the research project was attempting to explore, describe and understand the key effectiveness drivers of the funeral industry as understood by funeral service practitioners, as primary input to the construction of the provisional accreditation model.

The members of the expert panel were personally known to the researcher, which allowed for a more detailed participation and willingness to provide a critical response to the questions asked than if asked by someone not known to the panel. Another of the benefits of utilising the expert panel was that its members were a diverse group representing different sizes of funeral firms and locations throughout Victoria. These variations increased the likelihood that
the informants’ responses would bring the complexity of the industry to the surface. Therefore, the interview process of two meetings was organised around open-ended questions, to get a range of reflective responses in relation to the value of the provisional accreditation model.

### 4.4.3.2 How The Interview Questions Were Developed

Experiences drawn from the pilot process with the researcher’s supervisor and two senior funeral industry managers allowed for minor adjustments to be made to the interview questions. The introduction of the research problem to the interviewees allowed for some minor adjustments to terminology and the reordering of the questions into a more logical order. A preamble was added explaining the process of the two interviews and what they were intended to achieve, as well as providing background to the development of the provisional accreditation model. This ensured that the participants had allocated sufficient time for the interview and that any concerns or questions about the research project would be answered at the outset.

The researcher developed fifteen questions for the expert panel from the provisional model after discussion with his supervisor. Of these fifteen, six were used in the group interview and nine in the individual interviews. Questions were trialled with two senior members of the funeral industry not involved with the Victorian Divisional Council of the AFDA, before commencing the interview process with the expert panel. In the development of the interview questions, the roles were reversed with the supervisor becoming the interviewer and the researcher the interviewee. Rethinking and rewording emerged from this process.

The process of developing the interview questions with the researcher’s supervisor and trialling these questions with two senior colleagues within the funeral industry also allowed for the refinement and re-ordering of the interview questions. Emerging from this process was the opportunity for panel participants to think about the provisional model itself.

The second session occurred some two to three weeks later conducted as an individual telephone link-up to discuss more specific questions about the provisional model itself. The rationale behind the one-on-one interviews was that it gave the opportunity for individual
panel members to raise any concerns that they may have had about the first series of interviews in a more relaxed and confidential forum.

Another reason for deciding upon the two separate sets of interviews was that this allowed members of the expert panel an opportunity to re-examine their own views about the industry. In light of the first series of interviews, any additional in-depth questioning would allow the individual members of the panel to reflect on their industry through a sharper set of lenses. The resulting process of reflection might assist them to think more perspicaciously about their answers in the second series of phone interviews.

4.4.3.3 Interview Questions

The interview questions were divided into two rounds and emerged from the literature that had resulted in the development of the provisional model. The first round of interview questions related generally to the industry and to its effectiveness. The second round of phone interviews related specifically to the provisional model itself. The two interview rounds were based on fifteen questions which were open ended and allowed for flexibility to explore the various views of each of the informants.

The interview questions asked of the expert panel were:

**Group Interview**

1. What are the most important concerns facing funeral firms today?
2. What is your understanding of what an accreditation model is?
3. Do you think that all funeral firms should be accredited; if so, why, and if not, why?
4. What are the key characteristics (in your opinion) that make a funeral firm organisationally effective? Explain them.
5. In relation to Best Practice, how should organisations be identified as leaders in their field? Can they benchmark with other organisations and who are appropriate external comparison organisations?
6. What are the biggest areas of risk confronting funeral firms today?
Phone Interview

- Is the model easily understood? If not, what improvements could be made to it?
- Are the four assessment areas, Awareness, Implementation, Evaluation and Best Practice, appropriate and easily understood; if not, what changes could be made?
- Is the model too onerous for small to medium firms, and if so, do you have any suggestions for improvements?
- Is each of the four standards in the correct order and are all the tasks grouped into the correct standard areas?
- Should any of the tasks in the four standards be mandatory to gain accreditation? If so, which of the tasks should be mandatory?
- Should different standards apply to smaller firms; if so, what should they be?
- Do the four standards adequately represent what funeral service providers consider the four critical areas; if not, what standards should replace them?
- If you think about the details of the model, do you feel there is anything missing? What should be checked by an accrediting body?
- What are the major differences confronting funeral directors in Melbourne, and in provincial and country areas, and does the model require amendment to reflect these differences?

4.4.3.4 Implementation of the Interview Strategy

The Licensing Committee was made aware from an early stage that the researcher was a doctoral student at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), planning to do research around the licensing and accreditation issue. The committee were supportive when asked to join an expert panel and participate in a series of in-depth qualitative interviews to critique the provisional accreditation model.

Due to their nature, interviews have limitations such as the potential for biased findings and the political climate within the organisation (Blaikie, 2003). In order to overcome this limitation, Yin (1994) suggests that any interviews be cross-checked against other sources of data. The researcher was able to do this based on his experience as a funeral director and direct involvement in the participants’ world, as well as being able to interview key personnel.
in the health sector about how they developed their own accreditation model. Comparing and contrasting the two different industry sectors added to the methodological rigour and validity of the research project findings.

The provisional accreditation model was critiqued by the expert panel who suggested minor modifications. The finished product is a superior model to that first envisaged by industry leaders (see Table 5.2). The original, limited perceptions of how and what an accreditation model would look like demonstrates the importance of having a comprehensive model that is linked to organisational theory about effectiveness.

Key ways in which the final model is an advance upon the initial thinking of AFDA practitioners are:

- It is a systematic process that tracks the measurement of standards;
- It is a comprehensive model with links to higher standards of quality;
- It links the literature on organisational effectiveness directly to the model; and
- There is a stronger emphasis on higher level quality and standards rather than the traditional self-assessment process of the current premises, equipment and vehicles (PEV) standards espoused by the AFDA.

After discussion with the researcher’s supervisor, it was decided that the series of two interviews with the funeral expert panel would be held over a four-week period commencing in November 2005, and which were to be limited to no more than one and a half hours per session. These interviews with the funeral expert panel are not to be confused with the interviews with the four practitioners referred to earlier. The interviews with the funeral expert panel had a very different purpose and employed different questions.

Participants were provided with the draft provisional accreditation model for their consideration prior to the meeting. This panel feedback provided a means of progressively refining and further developing the provisional accreditation model. The initial group meeting focussed on discussions about accreditation and organisational effectiveness to establish a shared understanding among panel members. Telephone interviews with individual funeral expert panel members for the purpose of examining the framework of the model and how it could be improved followed the group interviews.

The interviews and transcripts allowed the researcher to do two things simultaneously:

1. Understand the value of the accreditation model, and
2. Appreciate how organisational theory helps to make deeper sense of the interview comments.

4.4.4 Data

4.4.4.1 Introduction

Data were collected and reworked and as a consequence the provisional model was reviewed and revised and findings were made. This section examines data generation, reduction and analysis.

4.4.4.2 Data Generation

Interviews were conducted with seven senior members of the Victorian funeral industry. These expert panel members were selected based on their involvement as members of the AFDA Licensing Committee as explained above. Each interviewee participated in two interviews, one group, one individual. Members of the panel were contacted by telephone by the researcher and by letter seeking their voluntary consent in the research project. They were then posted the provisional model two weeks prior to the first interview.

The introductory session for the project coincided with a Victorian AFDA divisional meeting. All but one of the participants attended. This person was subsequently interviewed separately. The participants were then sent a separate letter outlining the research objectives and asking for their permission to be interviewed. The first interview was conducted face-to-face with the questions being asked as outlined above in this chapter. All interviews were taped with the participants’ consent so the researcher could concentrate and lead the discussions with the participants.

The second series of telephone interviews were held as separate, individual conversations after the first group interview. At the conclusion of the interview participants were requested to post back the provisional accreditation model to the researcher in the reply paid envelope provided with any further amendments deemed appropriate.
4.4.4.3 Data Reduction

With so much information and numerous transcripts generated over the period of the research project, the researcher considered it important to manage data reduction seriously to ensure that it was manageable and meaningful.

The first step taken to reduce the data was to summarise the full transcript of the group interview. This summary is presented in Appendix Three and aspects of the transcript are integrated into Chapter Five; they illustrate how each of the participants presented their main views. The full transcript of the meeting is available on request, but was too long to be included in an appendix. This view is supported by Hussey and Hussey (2003, p. 252) who state, “To record only the words or phrases you consider are particular in the area of interest may mean that you discard large amounts of data which could help you understand the phenomenon you are studying more thoroughly at a deeper level.” Care was taken to retain concepts and descriptors related to the research questions.

4.4.4.4 Data Analysis

Interview data are organised into a series of grids and tables for presentation and analysis (see Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Responses from the participants of the expert panel were collated and grouped together in broad question areas to ascertain the key issues and themes that emerged. This process continued after each interview to see if any further issues needed to be raised or pursued.

Data were processed by listening to the taped interview completely in one sitting before the transcript was typed. This allowed the researcher to compare his original notes from the interview with the taped interview to ascertain if any key ideas or themes were missed initially and needed to be followed up in subsequent interviews. A grid was then produced and distilled into a table format. Adjacent to each question asked are notes on comments or quotations that provide a more detailed insight into participant perceptions.

The researcher categorised and coded patterns and themes for analysis. This thematic analysis of comments added a greater depth of meaning, as the themes that emerged were related directly to the provisional accreditation model. The interviewees are experts in the industry so it could be reasonably assumed that the contents of the interviews are significant and revealing and are worth being re-understood. For instance, the researcher was aware that he
needed to consider the political understandings of the interviews, as each interviewee had their own agenda and bias, which was not always directly stated. There may have been a tendency for some expert panel members from larger firms to deliberately bias their answers to create barriers against entry to the industry.

4.4.5 Validity

4.4.5.1 Validity and Reliability

The key challenge for case study research written within the Realism paradigm is to create a design with a demonstrated degree of validity and reliability. Yin (1994) suggests that the quality of a case study design can be tested according to four logical criteria: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. These four criteria are discussed below.

4.4.5.2 Construct Validity

Yin (1994) contends that the two key elements in improving construct validity are to establish a chain of evidence and to use multiple sources of evidence. This ensures that the information that is being developed to construct or support the theory behind the accreditation model can be checked by others. Yin’s (1994) approach was applied in this research project, by asking similar interview questions of all the participants to ascertain the similarities and differences in their responses. The common responses between the interviewees to set questions support the view that construct validity is met.

This research project has utilised constructs and measures of evidence validated in other studies, as well as several sources of evidence for each construct. These sources of evidence were accessed from the development of the provisional accreditation model, which was based on the use of prior theory, group and individual interviews and participant observations. These results were confirmed by the existing literature which the provisional model was based upon. The use of these multiple lines of sight (triangulation), as stated by Berry (1995), gave the researcher a richer and more substantial picture of reality to support construct validity.
4.4.5.3 Internal Validity

Yin (1994) refers to internal validity as a cause and effect relationship where certain conditions lead to other conditions. In order to support a claim for internal validity, the researcher needs to be able to establish a link between the cause and its effect. Internal validity is a concern for causal or explanatory case studies Yin (1994) and this researcher has sought to construct an accreditation model that embodies a wide-ranging explanation of organisational effectiveness. If the purpose of the accreditation model is to act as an influence for improved industry performance, then the initial construction of the provisional model, based upon a comprehensive review of the empirical literature and the subsequent refinement of that model, through the expert panel interviews, should be seen as supporting the claims to a casual link and thereby constituting internal validity.

Should the interviewees respond to the probes of the questions asked, in a manner consistent with the relevant theory, this would indicate that the questions posed were precise and understood by the interviewees.

The principle objectives of this research project are to discover:

1. What are the major characteristics and challenges that face funeral service providers that should drive an accreditation model for the funeral firms in Victoria?

2. What are the major success factors in becoming organisationally effective?

3. Why are these characteristics and factors important and how do they underpin the development of an accreditation model?

4.4.5.4 External Validity

Blaikie (2003), Yin (1989) and Eckstein (1975) have all raised the issue of whether it is possible to generalise or theorise from case studies. External validity refers to the ability to generalise the results of a research project beyond the immediate case study (Yin, 1994). Blaikie (2003) argues that researchers should not be concerned with the issue of representativeness and generalisability in the narrow sense, but rather with appropriateness and that a case study needs to be located in the context of relevant knowledge and appropriate theory.
The researcher agrees with Yin (1994) who argues for analytic generalisation (i.e. theory building) in case studies, rather than statistical generalisation (i.e. theory testing). In order for a theory to be analytically generalisable, it must be tested through replication of the findings in a second or even a third case study. An aim of this research project is to generate results that can be used in further research, by utilising the interview protocol to provide data for constructing the accreditation model.

4.4.5.5 Reliability

The aim of reliability, according to Yin (1994), is to minimise the errors and biases in a study. The research procedures must be trustworthy enough so that the research can be audited and so that if the same procedures were followed, a consistency of results and findings would eventuate. This research project created a case study data base describing the detail of the procedures involved (e.g. case selection and interview procedures) that can be replicated by other researchers should they wish to repeat the same type of study.

4.5 Summary of Research Methodology

A summary of the research methodology used in this research project is shown in Figure 4.1. In this research, the literature was used to construct a provisional accreditation model. This model was used as a focus for discussions for the interviews, data collection, analysis and review. This chapter describes and discusses the research design and the methodology used to address the research question. This chapter has discussed why the research project employs the Realist paradigm, with an abductive approach in a case study format, and utilises case study interviews for data collection and validation. The next chapter, Chapter Five, provides an in-depth analysis of the research findings.
Chapter Five

Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Chapter One identified the licensing issue as the first step of regulating the funeral industry and as a means to put into context the logical second step (i.e., the development of an accreditation model). A review of the literature and exemplars in Chapter Two arrived at an account of the current state of knowledge regarding the factors that contribute to organisational effectiveness. Chapter Three explained how the provisional accreditation model was constructed and developed from the exemplars and literature about organisational effectiveness. Chapter Four then detailed the research methodology, outlining the research objectives, questions and strategy.

In this chapter the researcher utilises Blaikie’s (2003, p. 10) views about abductive strategy to employ hypotheses in the cause of generating theory. These hypotheses are possible answers to questions that emerge as the research proceeds, and are used to direct subsequent stages of the research. The researcher’s hypothesis was that the Funeral Industry in Victoria had certain characteristics that would enhance or curtail progress to accreditation. It was discovered that as different issues were answered, other questions emerged as the data were collected.

The purpose of this chapter is to report and discuss the data, as they specifically relate to the research questions. This chapter provides an opportunity for the researcher to contrast the observations with the existing research about organisational effectiveness (see Chapter Two) and discusses how it is possible to develop an accreditation model to measure standards for the funeral industry. It takes into account exemplars, the literature about organisational effectiveness and the views of expert practitioners.

In the first place, this chapter presents the comments upon the interviews with senior representatives and expert panel members from the Funeral Industry (see Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Those data have been obtained from structured, open-ended interviews. A condensed version of the group interview is provided in Appendix Three. Responses provide insights into the views of the expert panel and their understanding of what accreditation means and the key characteristics that make funeral firms
organisationally effective. Blaikie (2003, p. 234) refers to group interviews as gaining popularity as a method of data collection, and group interaction provides a greater insight into why certain opinions were held.

In the second place, interview data were then analysed through an abductive strategy, applying three different perspectives:

- Mutual Perceptions
- Symbolic Meanings
- Motives and Rules

The researcher, by taking an insider view of the funeral industry, as a participant observer, was able to add rigour to the analysis section by utilising these three perspectives.

5.2 Data

5.2.1 Responses to Accreditation Probes from Senior Industry Representatives

This section explores a summary of responses to open-ended questions from the expert panel and a separate interview with four senior members of the industry, prior to the construction of the provisional model. In order to develop questions the researcher reviewed a wide variety of literature identifying indices and potential benchmarks. Various publications were selected from the Funeral Industry (see 4.4.3.3) and chosen for their focus upon standards of performance within the industry and current issues.

Findings have been obtained from structured open-ended interviews. A series of interviews was conducted with four senior members of the Victorian Funeral Industry, who were not members of the expert panel, as a means of further uncovering contextual factors that should be considered in the drafts of an accreditation model for the funeral industry. Table 5.1 presents the results of these interviews, with the answers to the four questions highlighted. The importance of this initial interview was that these senior representatives had not been exposed to either the licensing or accreditation issues. This helped the researcher to refine the questions for later interviews with the expert panel. The language used and the responses elicited from the probes indicated a broader scope of issues than was anticipated (i.e., more information). The process changed the expectations of the interviewer, who realised that there may be a greater breadth of information elicited by probes developed for the expert panel.
It was generally felt by the expert panel members that any accreditation model should be simple and cover OHS issues specifically. Similarly, it was acknowledged that an educative program was required in the implementation process. The responses of these interviewees to the probes indicated a prevalence of a traditional view and a narrow focus on funeral service provision. Their understanding of the meaning of accreditation was limited. The table of results of these interviews (Table 5.1) indicates what senior members of the funeral industry imagined an accreditation model should look like prior to its construction and development. The senior representatives did not understand what standards meant or how they could be measured. They viewed accreditation narrowly as an audit process, to be assessed by yes/no responses rather than a scale of indices.

The responses from the senior representatives in relation to who or what should be licensed was at a lower level than from other members of the AFDA expressed at the AFDA Members Day (see Section 1.6.2.1).

The four senior respondents’ answers were superficial and not holistic. It was clear from interviewing them that a full set of specific items were needed to be included in the construction of an accreditation model. This would allow the uninitiated members of the Funeral Industry the opportunity to understand the categories of items relevant to each standard. A level of detail was needed to explain where elements of funeral service fit, and the nature of connecting elements. The respondents did not see the interrelationships and they only proposed low level audits. The accreditation model therefore has a dual role, one as a measurement tool, the other as an educative tool helping uninitiated members of the industry to understand the level of detail involved.
Table 5.1: Summary of Responses of Senior Members of the AFDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Respondent A</th>
<th>Respondent B</th>
<th>Respondent C</th>
<th>Respondent D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your understanding of what an accreditation model is?</td>
<td>- It's about higher standards. - The general public thinks all funeral directors are the same. Accreditation shows that they're not. Some have higher standards than others. - A list of requirements firms would have to abide by.</td>
<td>- A way of determining whether a firm was actually up to a certain standard. - It formalises firms who reach standards.</td>
<td>- It's about being professional and meeting standards that the general public can feel safe about. - About setting guidelines for firms about how they have to act and what level of professionalism is needed.</td>
<td>- It's like the nursing field, where standards are set and requirements are put in place to meet them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What do you think an accreditation model would look like?</td>
<td>- It needs to be fairly simple and understandable. - It needs to have simple, clear, specific expectations of what we should be doing, not what we think we should be doing.</td>
<td>- They would be similar to the ADA minimum standards, with some additions. - The way the AFDA has done it is pretty good. - Self-assessment process. - Tick a box to ensure you have complied with the written processes.</td>
<td>- Examine premises and equipment standards. - Level of staff training and qualifications. - It should be reasonably stringent.</td>
<td>- Similar to the PEV policy of the AFDA. - It needs to be simple so that small firms will be able to understand it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What areas should an accreditation model cover?</td>
<td>- Treatment of the deceased. - It should be similar to the AFDA PEV check list.</td>
<td>- Treatment of the deceased in an hygienic manner. - Risk management areas like mortuary practices.</td>
<td>- Staff training. - Premises, vehicles, equipment.</td>
<td>- The mortuary area and the need for hygienic treatment of the deceased. - Mainly PEV areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How would an accreditation model work?</td>
<td>- It should be compulsory. - An education / training process would need to implement it, so that all firms could understand it. - It shouldn't be too hard to implement or achieve.</td>
<td>- Each firm needs to be accredited, in spite of Government intrusion; because of OHS issues. - An external auditor is required to check compliance with the accreditation process.</td>
<td>- Whilst it would be time-consuming and costly, it should be compulsory. - An independent inspector should assess your standards.</td>
<td>- It should be a self-assessment process monitored by an AFDA inspection. - Education sessions would be needed to implement it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 Expert Panel Group Interview Feedback

A series of interview questions was developed with the researcher’s supervisor and trialled with two senior funeral industry colleagues. This process supported a refinement and re-ordering of the interview questions prior to the formal interviews with the panel. Responses from the expert panel interview provided insight into what they consider are the key characteristics that make funeral firms organisationally effective and their understanding of the accreditation process. A summary of respondents’ views to each of the six questions is presented in Table 5.2. In constructing this table the researcher was selective in highlighting the key comments of the interviewees.

Table 5.2 was developed using data reduction techniques detailed in Blaikie (2003, p. 236). Data were lifted from the full transcript of tape recordings and condensed (see Appendix Three). These
data were further reduced by the researcher who subsequently created a thematic table (see Table 5.2).

Blaikie (2003) refers to these data reduction techniques as a means of developing themes in qualitative methods. For example, he refers to open and axial coding in grounded theory, and typology construction in the abductive research strategy. The researcher developed a legend (Tables 5.2 and 5.3) to categorise each of the three perspectives by colour code (i.e., Themes/typologies). The researcher only colour coded items arising with a high frequency. Outliers were noted, but not colour coded. In this report the researcher has described data that appeared frequently or with a high emphasis. Infrequent or marginal data were eliminated at the time of data reduction.

In this project, the researcher (Blaikie, 2003, p. 240) applies Dey’s (1993) three spiral processes of describing, classifying and connecting the research data by:

- Describing and reducing the data;
- Classifying each of the three perspectives in a colour code (see legends in Tables 5.2 and 5.3); and
- Connecting each of the three perspectives where they are blended with each other (see Tables 5.2 and 5.3).

The interview process provided an opportunity for panel participants to consider in-depth factors related to the provisional model. The initial focus was upon general questions about the industry and what makes funeral firms effective, and the subsequent focus was about the accreditation model. These questions gave the researcher the opportunity to examine the provisional model through the experiences of the expert panel.

Expert panel interviews were also a means of understanding the issues that were confronting funeral firms regardless of their size. The task given the expert panel was to critique and validate the researcher’s provisional accreditation model. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were handed questions that were to be discussed in the next interview (individually by telephone) regarding the accreditation model.
### Table 5.2: Summary of Expert Panel Group Interview Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What are the most important concerns facing funeral firms today?</th>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
<th>Respondent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumerism. Apology is no longer accepted by clients for accidents and mistakes, there are more demands for compensation.</td>
<td>- Consumerism. Apology is no longer accepted by clients for accidents and mistakes, there are more demands for compensation.</td>
<td>- Larger companies should guide celebrants in requirements.</td>
<td>- Staff retention and selection and ongoing training.</td>
<td>- OHS issues: costs and management of systems. Union involvement in standard practices now too much documentation with onus of litigation on company.</td>
<td>- Selecting good staff by using psychological testing for potential employees.</td>
<td>- Compensation for staff concerning psychological injury eg. Emotional trauma from seeing a motor vehicle accident victim.</td>
<td>- Making sure you do the right thing by your client.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Charging for event management (challenge rather than a concern).</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Better use of in-house resources and multi-skilled staff increase the cost base of firms.</td>
<td>- Overcoming burnout and stress.</td>
<td>- Increased competition with smaller operators undercutting and delivering substandard service.</td>
<td>- Changing consumer expectations of funerals. No longer rituals, now events requiring creative and organisational skills.</td>
<td>- Competition from firms who have lower pricing structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consumer expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Increase in time between death and funeral which raises logistical issues.</td>
<td>- Cost of technology for AV presentations</td>
<td>- attracting and paying for staff with event management skills, as well as fact that current staff may not be suited to event management.</td>
<td>- Training is costly for small operators, as well as finding the staff to replace you while you're on training.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Industrial relations</td>
<td>- staying profitable perhaps by centralising or outsourcing training and out of hours calls.</td>
<td>- When your small, it's hard to train casuals as they aren't there enough to remember what you told them last time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Staff efficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Risk management and litigation are a concern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Death rate will increase so need to prepare for increased staff levels and facilities as well as succession planning.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Consumers expectations have changed over the last 10 years. They are more open about talking about funerals and they expect greater levels of service.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Training celebrants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Delay in receiving bodies from coroner’s court.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Less staff with same levels of funerals and more demands expected by consumers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- OHS issues: costs and management of systems. Union involvement in standard practices now too much documentation with onus of litigation on company.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased competition with smaller operators undercutting and delivering substandard service.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Cost of technology for AV presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Industrial relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Staff efficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Death rate will increase so need to prepare for increased staff levels and facilities as well as succession planning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Training celebrants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Delay in receiving bodies from coroner’s court.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Less staff with same levels of funerals and more demands expected by consumers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. What is your understanding of what an accreditation model is?</th>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
<th>Respondent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliance matters are also involved.</td>
<td>- Compliance matters are also involved.</td>
<td>- Every aspect of a funeral has to reach the pinnacle. Striving for public approval and continual improvement.</td>
<td>- Related to service delivery so I don’t think business planning should be included.</td>
<td>- An audit in a number of specific areas eg. Staff training. OHS, vehicles, over a range of systems to reach a specific standard.</td>
<td>- Should be independently administered like a tax audit.</td>
<td>- Having standards that all funeral directors have to meet. It’s about raising the bar to meet certain minimum standards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- should be independently administered like a tax audit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you think that all funeral firms should be accredited, if so why and if not, why?</td>
<td>Firms should be licensed, as this will clean up the industry then accreditation won’t matter as much.</td>
<td>All firms should be licensed. Licensing would make a big difference to the industry but accreditation would not.</td>
<td>There should be minimum standards.</td>
<td>Yes, to minimise staff leaving large firms and setting up on their own.</td>
<td>There should be minimum standards.</td>
<td>There should be minimum requirements/standards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- All firms should be licensed. Licensing would make a big difference to the industry but accreditation would not.</td>
<td>- Yes, to minimise staff leaving large firms and setting up on their own.</td>
<td>- Accreditation should not be an entrance impediment.</td>
<td>- Inspectors should be trained.</td>
<td>- Licensing and accreditation can mean the same thing.</td>
<td>- Accreditation should be voluntary, like AFDA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Licensing should be the bare minimum to operate and can be taken away if breeched.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Licensing should be the bare minimum to operate and can be taken away if breeched.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Accreditation is an extra level of competency.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Yes, the business should hold a licence and if they do the wrong thing that licence should be lost so they cannot practise.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the key characteristics (in your opinion) that make a funeral firm organisationally effective? Explain them.</td>
<td>Structure (dependent on firm size). - Reputation (hard to earn and to maintain). - A balance of multi-skilled and specialist staff is needed.</td>
<td>Staff must be able to handle all client requirements without outsourcing. Saves money.</td>
<td>Information Technology is one.</td>
<td>Quality of the staff. They need to be multi-skilled and be motivated. Firms need to create clear roles and appropriate management structures.</td>
<td>Information Technology is necessary for larger firms.</td>
<td>Adaptability and preparedness for change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- You have to be dedicated and work hard. - Education and training is important. - Good communication skills and a knowledge of the grieving process. - A good knowledge of finances is essential. - A good funeral software package has meant there is a lot less repetitious paperwork required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In relation to Best Practice, how should organisations be identified as leaders in their field? Can they adequately benchmark with other organisations? Who are appropriate external comparison organisations?</td>
<td>Members within the AFDA are a good guide.</td>
<td>Canada and US funeral firms’ marketing stand out.</td>
<td>A large Melbourne family based firm is a leader because their then CEO was forward thinking and took some risks, developed education and training.</td>
<td>A large Melbourne family based firm is a leader eg. Plasma screens, limos. - We could benchmark against large overseas funeral companies eg. Hong Kong</td>
<td>Overseas firms.</td>
<td>External organisations like hospitality, hotels and tourism provide comfort, services and caring services. - Can learn more by benchmarking outside funeral industry and adapting to suit our needs. - It is difficult to benchmark with other AFDA firms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- A large Melbourne firm is a leader in the field. For comparison purposes I examine larger regional funeral firms, even though we are on a much smaller scale. - The health industry in relation to infection control could be considered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. What are the biggest areas of risk confronting funeral firms today? (Apart from OHS and litigation).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
<th>Respondent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Not pricing ourselves out of the market (quality).</td>
<td>- Over-capitalisation combined with bad debts.</td>
<td>Infection Control</td>
<td>- Bad debts. We try and get 50% of grave and interment fee prior to the funeral.</td>
<td>- Perhaps the funeral director is becoming less relevant.</td>
<td>- Alternate products such as cardboard coffins. Shift from traditional rituals to memorial means coffin is not as important to families. A large amount of our profitability is in coffin sales, we will need to look at re-adjusting costings. - Direct selling of coffins to consumer is a related issue.</td>
<td>- Infection Control. - The bird flu is of concern.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend
- Mutual Perceptions
- Symbolic Meanings
- Motives and Rules
5.2.3 Expert Panel Individual Telephone Interviews Feedback

The second round of interviews with expert panel members was conducted three weeks after the group interview, via individual telephone links. These interviews focussed on specific questions about the provisional accreditation model. The rationale behind the one-on-one conversations about the provisional accreditation model was that it gave an opportunity for individual expert panel members to raise any concerns that they may have had about the group interview in a more relaxed and confidential conversation.

Another reason for deciding upon two separate rounds of interviews was to allow members of the expert panel an opportunity to re-examine their own view about the industry. It was anticipated that further in-depth questioning would allow individual members of the expert panel to be able to reflect on their industry through a more considered set of lenses. This approach is supported by Alvesson (2003) who developed a framework for thinking about research interviews. He considered that a perspicacious understanding of the research interview meant conceptualising what goes on in the situation and how the outcomes could be understood.

The researcher concurred with Fontana and Frey’s (2000, p. 663) view that “there is a realisation that we cannot lift the results of interviewing out of the contexts in which they were gathered and claim them as objective data with no strings attached”. Conversely, the researcher considered data as a product of context and individual differences.

The researcher was aware of the political climate within the expert panel. Some of the experts from the larger metropolitan firms had powerful vested interests to shape the industry. This political climate has shaped their various responses to the model (i.e., responses are very much reflective of participants’ business interests and the effect accreditation might have on these interests).

Alvesson’s (2003) framework was based on thinking about how we can conceptualise and use interviews, by utilising metaphors as a way of avoiding categorical positions on subject matters. By challenging and inspiring rather than suggesting firm positions, the researcher effectively opened up additional ways of examining and reporting on the interviews.

A series of nine open-ended questions were asked of individual panel members. This approach provided flexibility to explore individual views. This process was chosen as the main data collection method. The order of the questions was flexible, dependent upon the
issue arising from panel members. An opportunity was made available to probe the respondents’ answers at the time of asking the questions.

Questions to be asked at the second telephone interview were distributed at the end of the first interview, giving panel members an opportunity to further reflect upon questions about the provisional model before the second interview.

Table 5.3 highlights key comments of the participants relevant to the development of a set of consistent and measurable standards for funeral service provision. The table effectively reduces and organises interview data. Initially responses from participants were collated and grouped together in broad question areas. These themes were subsequently revisited and analysed (see Section 5.3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
<th>Respondent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the model easily understood? If not, what improvements could be made to it?</td>
<td>Yes. The summary on page 3 was a good reference.</td>
<td>Yes. It took a while to grasp, but the format was good.</td>
<td>For a non-tertiary educated person it is a bit difficult to understand but I did eventually see the pattern of the four standards coming through.</td>
<td>It's very comprehensive, particularly for large companies, but small companies would struggle to cope with it. It needs to be condensed to apply different levels of compliance based on the size and income level of the firm.</td>
<td>If it seemed a bit complicated to start with but once I started to pay more attention to it, it became more logical.</td>
<td>No. No specific thoughts on how it could be improved.</td>
<td>Yes, I can't see what improvements could be made to it. Easily understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Are the four assessment areas (Awareness, Implementation, Evaluation, Best Practice) appropriate and easily understood? If not, what changes could be made?</td>
<td>Yes. It's a logical process.</td>
<td>Yes. I wouldn't make any changes. They are quite easy to understand.</td>
<td>Yes. When I first started it seemed to be overkill but then I realised that you do need to break them down. Re Best Practice, it is becoming increasingly difficult to access benchmarking information through association membership.</td>
<td>Yes, I understood it alright, although there is too much detail in the document and it is the absolute extreme for what you need. Best Practice would be deleted, because you're aiming for best practice anyway.</td>
<td>Yes. They're very logical and make a lot of sense.</td>
<td>Yes, the first three are OK. Wasn't sure where Best Practice fitted into the other 3 assessment areas.</td>
<td>Yes, easily understood if they were broken down any more, you'd still end up with the same things in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is the model too onerous for small to medium firms and, if so, do you have any suggestions for improvements?</td>
<td>No. All funeral directors should have the same core values – commitment to service, be financially sound and understand industry requirements and the community.</td>
<td>No, I would have it all the same standards regardless of the size of the firm.</td>
<td>Yes, smaller firms don't always have well-defined policies and procedures because one person performs many roles. Small operators may not have a business plan, but they still monitor risks.</td>
<td>Yes, smaller firms don't have the resources or income levels to be able to comply with your model compared to the larger firms.</td>
<td>Yes, if accreditation was required to join association, people wouldn't do it because it is voluntary and can do without it. Afraid of confidentiality breaches.</td>
<td>Yes, largely everything is valid, but it has to be filtered more. It needs to be fairly simple to fly in our industry.</td>
<td>No, we still have to cover the same issues as larger firms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are each of the four standards in the correct order and are all the tasks grouped into the correct standard areas?</td>
<td>1 Operations 2 Client Management 3 Risk Management 4 Business Systems in that order but then through the course of the interview stated <em>All standards are equally important.</em></td>
<td>1 Operations 2 Risk Management 3 Client Management 4 Business Systems (except prepaids, should be in Operations) 4 Risk Management</td>
<td>Yes, order about right, might put client management before risk management.</td>
<td>All 4 are important at different times. If one's not working the business won't be healthy. Business systems and operations are the most important. Risk mgmt follows on from that.</td>
<td>Will differ from firm to firm. Doesn't think the order is that important. Would rettitle Risk Management and call it Administration Compliance.</td>
<td>Yes. Business Operations Risk Management Client Management It's a Logical Progression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Transfer, storage and care of deceased should be mandatory. *You must be able to show historically satisfactory performance, be financially sound; business practices and risk management *historical compliance with industry and regulatory requirements</td>
<td>They're all important. I wouldn't leave anything out. But could have different levels to allow smaller firms to reach some level of accreditation</td>
<td>Not sure other than PEV should be mandatory. Business Systems and Risk Mgt should not be mandatory. Different levels of accreditation could be harmful to industry cohesiveness.</td>
<td>Infection control, body preparation and documentation procedures should be mandatory regardless of the size of the firm, you have to have the correct procedures.</td>
<td>A certain amount of training should be mandatory. Staff should be regularly updated on manual handling and infection control issues. I don't think there should be that level of impingement on my business to allow me to operate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Should any of the tasks in the four standards be mandatory to gain accreditation? If so, which of the tasks should be mandatory?</td>
<td>No. You have to have the same fundamental values regardless of the business size.</td>
<td>Yes. Firms that do under 100 a year don't have the same resources.</td>
<td>Yes. Business systems and risk mgmt should be removed for these firms.</td>
<td>No. If you want to be in the business, do it properly.</td>
<td>No, it would make the assessment process more difficult and inherently political.</td>
<td>No, all standards should be the same i.e. infection control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Transfer, storage and care of deceased should be mandatory. *You must be able to show historically satisfactory performance, be financially sound; business practices and risk management *historical compliance with industry and regulatory requirements</td>
<td>They're all important. I wouldn't leave anything out. But could have different levels to allow smaller firms to reach some level of accreditation</td>
<td>Not sure other than PEV should be mandatory. Business Systems and Risk Mgt should not be mandatory. Different levels of accreditation could be harmful to industry cohesiveness.</td>
<td>Infection control, body preparation and documentation procedures should be mandatory regardless of the size of the firm, you have to have the correct procedures.</td>
<td>A certain amount of training should be mandatory. Staff should be regularly updated on manual handling and infection control issues. I don't think there should be that level of impingement on my business to allow me to operate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Should different standards apply for smaller firms? If so, what should they be?</td>
<td>Yes. You could incorporate operations and client management into one but it’s not necessary. I’m comfortable with them.</td>
<td>Yes, not directly addressed but implied.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes, as medium/smaller firms don’t have the same financial resources as the larger firms.</td>
<td>No. If you want to be in the business, do it properly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do the four standards adequately represent what funeral service providers consider the four critical areas? If not, what standards should replace them?</td>
<td>Yes. You could incorporate operations and client management into one but it’s not necessary. I’m comfortable with them.</td>
<td>Yes, not directly addressed but implied.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes, I think it’s very comprehensive. For the smaller firms some of the areas could be condensed, such as business controls and marketing as they have external professionals who can handle that.</td>
<td>Yes, Operations and client management could be merged.</td>
<td>Yes, it takes a broad view of each of these areas and picks up everything.</td>
<td>Yes, they are covered very well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. If you think about the details of the model, do you feel there is anything missing? What should be checked by an accrediting body?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
<th>Respondent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Succession planning in Risk Mgt under Insurance</td>
<td>No, the model is excellent. Firms should be accredited every three years then a 18 month checkpoint?</td>
<td>No, I couldn't think of anything that obviously stood out as being missing. Might want to review policies more than once every three years. Also various suggestions and typos.</td>
<td>Debt recovery, this is an area which funeral firms have got to become more aware of and as an industry we have to address this issue.</td>
<td>No, but the model needs a catch all phrase to cover areas that currently aren't part of the funeral industry, so that assessment can then fit into the model. i.e. like AV. 5 years ago not used and now it is established as part of normal practice.</td>
<td>No, I couldn't think of anything that obviously stood out as being missing. Might want to review policies more than once every three years. Also various suggestions and typos.</td>
<td>No, but the model needs a catch all phrase to cover areas that currently aren't part of the funeral industry, so that assessment can then fit into the model. i.e. like AV. 5 years ago not used and now it is established as part of normal practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. What are the major differences confronting funeral directors in Melbourne, provincial and country areas? Does the model require amendment to reflect these differences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
<th>Respondent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Distinguishing your company from the opposition vs sole provider in country areas</em></td>
<td><em>Volume of funerals is a major difference</em></td>
<td><em>Succession in country practices is more difficult because there are no staff outside the family who may wish to purchase the business.</em></td>
<td><em>Distinguishing your company from the opposition vs sole provider in country areas</em></td>
<td><em>Volume of funerals is a major difference</em></td>
<td><em>Succession in country practices is more difficult because there are no staff outside the family who may wish to purchase the business.</em></td>
<td><em>Distinguishing your company from the opposition vs sole provider in country areas</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no major differences. OHS is the most important change in last 20 years. All faced with the same issues regardless of size.</td>
<td>The administrators of the accreditation system need to understand difficulties of smaller operators to get away from the office for training or info sessions.</td>
<td>In the provincial and country areas in a lot of cases you are doing funerals for people that you know and it gives you more of a licence of dealing more intimately with the family. The consumer’s not as critical because they know the funeral director personally.</td>
<td>Can be more difficult to survive in the country. Need minimum standards so competitors don’t undercut by doing a shoddy job.</td>
<td>Some smaller towns don’t have competitors and there can be the aptitude to not change and embrace the community needs.</td>
<td>Because of your size you don’t have the staff resources to have time off. It’s constant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other comments</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;From a funeral director perspective 1 Operations 2 Client Management 3 Risk Mgt &amp; Bus Systems 4 For an owner Risk Mgt is first 5 Some people are always keen to improve themselves, some are complacent. 6 Companies that don’t embrace change will suffer in long term 7 A lot of changes were generated by generational change. 8 Licensing will weed out the rogue operator who isn’t meeting standards. 9 Distinguish between company accreditation and individual accreditation 10 Could be a series of levels of accreditation and individual accreditation at different levels for staff, firm, premises, education levels etc. 11 Need for introduction explanatory sessions. 12 Explain accreditation individually because people may not feel comfortable asking questions in groups 13 Perhaps business systems and risk mgt should not be mandatory for accreditation 14 Induction should be formal to protect management 15 The inter-firm comparisons were good for benchmarking and lobbying governments 16 Best practice section gets repetitive 17 Always report oversize requirements</td>
<td>&quot;Accreditation can be one of a firm’s greatest sources of advertising. 2 &quot;Thinks association will embrace accreditation 3 &quot;Compared to 20 years ago, people on the AFDA are more prepared to speak up now 4 Some larger firms will be reluctant to release their business plan and financials for review due to confidentiality. 5 Use AFDA fee structure to define size of firms 6 Need to have objective criteria and it will be quite costly. Need to look into costs of the process. 7 The best way to teach people to is go on the road. People are more interested when they’re being told something than having to read it. They get a grasp of it faster and a better understanding as there are people who can answer questions immediately. 8 &quot;Accreditation can be costly but I don’t think it’s too big a cost for funeral firms, you don’t see many poor firms.&quot; 9 &quot;There are costs but if it’s something that can be implemented across the board then every operator is going to have an increase in costs.&quot; 10 &quot;It’s certainly a great document, that is very comprehensive, that can be used as a road map particularly for larger nationally based firms.&quot; 11 &quot;Accreditation to me really doesn’t mean very much unless it means something to the customer.&quot; 12 &quot;My concern would be that off the top that this is just too much information for people to get comfortable with.&quot; 13 &quot;It’s a bit like registering a car, you’ve got a car that is registered, but you’ve got to be licensed to drive it, so you have a licensed operator in charge of your funeral home.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Finance, merchandising and marketing shouldn’t be part of accreditation. He doesn’t want to make P&amp;L public. 2 I certainly don’t want someone telling me how I should run my business in those types of areas. Accreditation is really pretty worthless, because if you can’t police the performance with a mechanism for punishment there is not a lot of point. 3 &quot;Could be a series of levels of accreditation and individual accreditation at different levels for staff, firm, premises, education levels etc. 4 Accreditation can be costly but I don’t think it’s too big a cost for funeral firms, you don’t see many poor firms.&quot; 5 &quot;There are costs but if it’s something that can be implemented across the board then every operator is going to have an increase in costs.&quot; 6 &quot;It’s certainly a great document, that is very comprehensive, that can be used as a road map particularly for larger nationally based firms.&quot; 7 &quot;Accreditation to me really doesn’t mean very much unless it means something to the customer.&quot; 8 &quot;My concern would be that off the top that this is just too much information for people to get comfortable with.&quot; 9 &quot;It’s a bit like registering a car, you’ve got a car that is registered, but you’ve got to be licensed to drive it, so you have a licensed operator in charge of your funeral home.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Quotes</td>
<td>&quot;I think it’s important to have a business plan to start with. That’s a key because from that stems most of your other standards.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Respondent 1**
  - From a funeral director perspective
  - Operations 1
  - Client Management 2
  - Risk Mgt & Bus Systems 3
  - For an owner Risk Mgt is first
  - Some people are always keen to improve themselves, some are complacent.
  - Companies that don’t embrace change will suffer in long term
  - A lot of changes were generated by generational change.
  - Licensing will weed out the rogue operator who isn’t meeting standards.
  - Distinguish between company accreditation and individual accreditation
  - Could be a series of levels of accreditation and individual accreditation at different levels for staff, firm, premises, education levels etc.

- **Respondent 2**
  - Accreditation can be one of a firm’s greatest sources of advertising.
  - Thinks association will embrace accreditation
  - Compared to 20 years ago, people on the AFDA are more prepared to speak up now
  - Some larger firms will be reluctant to release their business plan and financials for review due to confidentiality.
  - Use AFDA fee structure to define size of firms
  - Need to have objective criteria and it will be quite costly. Need to look into costs of the process.
  - The best way to teach people to is go on the road. People are more interested when they’re being told something than having to read it. They get a grasp of it faster and a better understanding as there are people who can answer questions immediately.
  - Accreditation can be costly but I don’t think it’s too big a cost for funeral firms, you don’t see many poor firms.
  - There are costs but if it’s something that can be implemented across the board then every operator is going to have an increase in costs.
  - It’s certainly a great document, that is very comprehensive, that can be used as a road map particularly for larger nationally based firms.

- **Respondent 3**
  - Finance, merchandising and marketing shouldn’t be part of accreditation. He doesn’t want to make P&L public.
  - I certainly don’t want someone telling me how I should run my business in those types of areas.
  - Accreditation is really pretty worthless, because if you can’t police the performance with a mechanism for punishment there is not a lot of point.

- **Respondent 4**
  - Could be a series of levels of accreditation and individual accreditation at different levels for staff, firm, premises, education levels etc.
  - Accreditation can be costly but I don’t think it’s too big a cost for funeral firms, you don’t see many poor firms.
  - There are costs but if it’s something that can be implemented across the board then every operator is going to have an increase in costs.
  - It’s certainly a great document, that is very comprehensive, that can be used as a road map particularly for larger nationally based firms.

- **Respondent 5**
  - Finance, merchandising and marketing shouldn’t be part of accreditation. He doesn’t want to make P&L public.
  - I certainly don’t want someone telling me how I should run my business in those types of areas.
  - Accreditation is really pretty worthless, because if you can’t police the performance with a mechanism for punishment there is not a lot of point.

- **Respondent 6**
  - Could be a series of levels of accreditation and individual accreditation at different levels for staff, firm, premises, education levels etc.
  - Accreditation can be costly but I don’t think it’s too big a cost for funeral firms, you don’t see many poor firms.
  - There are costs but if it’s something that can be implemented across the board then every operator is going to have an increase in costs.
  - It’s certainly a great document, that is very comprehensive, that can be used as a road map particularly for larger nationally based firms.

- **Respondent 7**
  - Finance, merchandising and marketing shouldn’t be part of accreditation. He doesn’t want to make P&L public.
  - I certainly don’t want someone telling me how I should run my business in those types of areas.
  - Accreditation is really pretty worthless, because if you can’t police the performance with a mechanism for punishment there is not a lot of point.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent 1</th>
<th>Respondent 2</th>
<th>Respondent 3</th>
<th>Respondent 4</th>
<th>Respondent 5</th>
<th>Respondent 6</th>
<th>Respondent 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| "Just because you’re successful in the past and in the present doesn’t mean you are going to be successful in the future. You’ve just got to keep working at making your business grow and be successful."
  "In reference to accreditation and continuous improvement, there’s always going to be different levels of support for change. It’s up to the industry leaders to do what they can to firstly improve themselves, but also to improve those around them."
  "The current staff levels are running at the same levels we had 5 years ago, but the demands in the last 5 years are that we have doubled our workload. Some firms have cut their levels 20% in that period, how can they sustain their level of service with reduced numbers?" | "I would be bitterly disappointed if our association didn’t grasp this 100% and take it around."  "Accreditation cements trust in a company, it gives people a great deal of faith and it strengthens the funeral industry."  "I would introduce the accreditation model all at once and not graduate it in, but give them 3 years to become compliant."  "Risk Management was the most important area and most funeral directors aren’t prepared and don’t monitor their risks constantly. Protection against litigation in work safety is our biggest concern." | "A large Melbourne firm have put their money where their mouth is and show leadership and vision and it’s hard to see it anywhere else in the industry."  "Those of us who believe in continuing education would probably grab it but a lot would probably say, ‘Oh, it’s just beyond me’."  "The industry needs to do more coal face training and less academic work, some of the certificate levels seem out of reach for those gravitating into our industry." | "The way of the future for medium and larger firms will be to outsource transfer and mortuary facilities."  "The model needs to be implemented over a period of time, with some grand-parenting clauses for existing firms."  "Many small/medium firms have limited business experience and there would need to be training sessions to explain the model and time needed to comply to the standards."  "The expectation now for publicly listed companies is making a profit for shareholders, you’ve got to cut your costs as much as you can and grow your volumes and grow your revenues."  "The surveyor of an accreditation process should be someone with industry based experience."  "I think it’s an outstanding model, it’s very comprehensive and it’s fantastic for a company like ours." | | | |
5.3 Analysis

5.3.1 Introduction

The researcher rejects the notion that there may be a single social reality and asserts that there are more likely to be several and changing social realities (see Section 4.4.2.3).

Thematic analysis was applied to the interview data in the previous section (see Table 5.2) as a means of sorting this data. In this section data are analysed from three different perspectives. The interviewer as a professional within the industry and as a participant observer examined the data from the three perspectives of:

- Mutual perceptions
- Symbolic meanings
- Motives and rules

5.3.2 Mutual Perceptions

The literature, exemplars from comparable industries and the interview data validate a customer focus as a priority and strong driver in the design of the package of services offered by the industry. This being the case, the Funeral Industry can draw on the experience of the human services industries (e.g., health) to identify activities that are likely to deliver the objectives that are sought by the industry.

The researcher, as a participant observer, sought to identify the mutual perceptions that were evident in discussions around the provisional accreditation model. Mutually held perceptions may occur frequently. Views that are shared amongst a significant number of people in an industry warrant consideration. Conversely, it is also important when perceptions are not mutual or mutually held perceptions are infrequent. This may indicate a need for change and / or creates an awareness of a lack of support for an issue. Key themes extrapolated from the interviews were:

- The customer as central focus
- Relevance of education and training
- The role of industry in self-regulation
- Identity of surveyors
5.3.2.1 The Customer as Central Focus

A majority view of the expert panel was that the customer should be the central focus of the accreditation model. The panel considered that the customer shapes the business and that standards need to be designed and assessed around aspects of the business that deliver customer services. The feelings of the panel are supported by both the literature and the health sector that has a thirty-year history of a patient-oriented accreditation process in Australia. Evidence from the literature, the health sector and the expert panel, support the construction of the provisional model with the client as a central focus.

Findings from interviews with health sector Respondents A and B indicated that the funeral accreditation model took a similar approach in areas such as quality, customer, governance and leadership. The underpinning principles of the funeral industry accreditation model both ensure that the customer is the central focus of any outcome and assist in addressing the key characteristics of organisational effectiveness.

The accreditation model lifts and enhances performance by assessing the business as a whole. One respondent objected to this approach by rejecting the concept of holism and also the need for responsiveness to consumer feedback. This shared view was limited to a small number of respondents. The larger number of respondents shared the view that the consumer should influence and drive the direction of the business. In essence, one group views the customer as only having limited influence, whilst the other group could be seen as supporting the ‘customer effect’ in every aspect of the business.

The interviews indicate that concepts of holistic approaches to management were not held by the interviewees. However, a less than holistic approach to quality management that fails to take account of some aspects of the business seems unlikely to achieve the integrated and comprehensive outcomes that are premised on holism.

In summary, all participants shared the ideal of the customer as the central focus, but the interpretation of which components of the business should be customer driven varied.
5.3.2.2 Relevance of Education and Training

The provisional model was seen as a set of consistent and measurable standards relevant to the field of funeral service provision. The iterative process of model refinement uncovered the fact that significant training and education would be required within the Funeral Industry to achieve understanding of a continuous quality improvement (CQI) philosophy. Successful implementation of an accreditation model would necessitate a staged educative process, supported by commitment and vision from the leadership of the AFDA. All panel members supported the need for continuing education as a means of embracing change.

It was generally felt that introductory and explanatory sessions about the accreditation model should be provided on a group and individual basis. It was considered by respondents that some funeral home owners and staff may not feel comfortable asking questions in groups and one respondent suggested that the best method to deliver the programs was to teach people via an outreach mode (i.e., face-to-face and to go on the road). Respondents considered people to be more interested when they are being told something than having to read it. They get a grasp of the issues faster and a better understanding as there are people who can answer questions immediately. The commonly held view was strongly in favour of education and training. Individual views uncovered rationales and preferences for the way in which education programs should be developed.

The value of an educative process in the implementation of the draft model was highlighted through the interviewing of the four senior members of the AFDA, who had not been previously involved in the licensing issue. The difference in growth between members of the expert panel exposed to an immersion process (i.e. licensing issue) compared with interviews with the four senior members was stark. There is no reason not to expect the same level of understanding in the senior members of the AFDA given the same opportunities. The researcher observed a significant increase in the level of understanding as a consequence of the interviews. The four senior members lagged behind the expert panel in their understanding of the accreditation process. This process highlights the importance of education to ensure a successful implementation and understanding of the accreditation process. The benefit of this kind of professional development to the funeral industry is evident.

A group of influential people with shared views (i.e., expert panel) has the potential to build coalitions and influence directions. This influence may be for or against the process of accreditation. This phenomenon illustrates the importance of education and training. The
consequences of education demonstrates the importance of the heightened interest needed to build strong coalitions for the accreditation process.

The implications of this educative process for the industry are significant. Participants in this process are likely to understand at a higher level the value and purpose of the accreditation process and how to utilise the accreditation model. This greater understanding may or may not reduce their fear of the accreditation process. Although not the focus of this study, the investigation process uncovered many contextual and procedurally related factors that appear to be relevant to the implementation of the accreditation model.

5.3.2.3 The Role of the Industry in Self-regulation

Tension about implementation issues is further discussed in Chapter Six. The literature and the experience of the health sector refer to the importance of the accreditation process being voluntary and based on audits conducted by peers. The Funeral Industry’s professional association will need to respond to this matter and speak with a unified voice, a view supported by Barnett (2004).

Different views were elicited from the expert panel, although all respondents considered that there should be compulsory aspects of the model. This was not surprising, given the background to the licensing issue outlined in Chapter One. Respondents One, Three, Four and Five indicated that transfer, storage, infection control and care of the deceased should be mandatory. Respondents One, Six and Seven considered that the operations and management areas were fundamental and that there needed to be some quality thresholds that firms would have to reach to be accredited.

Respondent Five raised a more problematic issue about the difficulty the AFDA would have in retaining membership if accreditation became a compulsory requirement of the Association. The AFDA has the potential for discretion to maintain an elite membership of accredited firms. From a sustainability perspective the AFDA could be at financial risk, particularly to its financial base, through the loss of too many members. Respondent Five considered that there would be resistance to compulsion and stated a variety of reasons why members may choose not to accredit their firms. Barker and Smith (1998) support this when they talk about costs of justified financial returns. Similarly Harris and Jago (2001) argue that if the accreditation process became too complicated, fewer firms would be willing to commit the time and resources required to become accredited.
There was concern expressed by Respondents Three and Five that mandatory provisions would impinge on business practices and that only issues identified by the Licensing Committee, such as transfer, storage, infection control and care of the deceased, should be mandatory (i.e., business and risk management standards should not be included in the accreditation process).

Involvement in the roll-out of licensing changed the expert panel members’ views about the importance of a voluntary commitment by firms to the process of accreditation. These views indicated an increase in impetus of a drive for an accreditation model that manifests a scale of various levels of quality and standards rather than minimalist licensing provisions. It is likely that many funeral firms, which fear change, may agree with the views of Respondent Three and Five and will therefore argue that the model should only incorporate minimum standards. This issue becomes pivotal for the implementation of any future accreditation model as there was an appreciation and understanding by the remainder of the group that accreditation supports improvement (i.e., higher standards).

The shared view of the expert panel was that industry wanted to retain the prerogative of self-regulation. This was not a proactive stance; rather it could be interpreted as a passive-aggressive stance. Inaction was chosen as the modus operandi. Specific examples of this included embracing the idea of increasing barriers of entry to the industry as a means of controlling change. Together with this, comments were also made about support for registration standards that could exclude mediocre firms from the marketplace. Discussion about the concept of self-regulation uncovered a number of controls described by interviewees, none of which included an accreditation strategy for the effective implementation of an accreditation process.

When a focus was put on accreditation issues the respondents were indirect and described a number of conditions and barriers to the implementation of the accreditation model. The idea of self-regulation was reduced to a discussion about how the accreditation model might be implemented. Shared views regarding implementation issues were limited to fragmented and low level indices (i.e., those consistent with licensing requirements). This was also consistent with the AFDA submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry (see Section 1.6.2.2).

Recommendations in Chapter Six address this issue and suggests a staged voluntary implementation process, followed by a phased-in process over an extended time period.
This is a matter that needs to be taken up by the professional association, and provides the AFDA with an opportunity to pick up and run with support for the accreditation process. The benefits to the funeral industry and the AFDA are self-evident. The Australian Funeral Industry has the potential to take a global leadership role through the early implementation of an accreditation model.

5.3.2.4 Identity of Surveyors

The accreditation instrument needs to be flexible and consistent and have a well-designed, simplified process to gain industry support. Surveyors need to be equipped with the various instruments to guide and standardise their approach to collection and measurement. The acceptability of the accreditation process to the Funeral Industry will depend on the acceptability of surveyors and how they work. These surveyors will need strong industry experience and skills associated with the accreditation process, as well as the respect of their industry peers.

Harris and Jago (2001) suggest that the level of industry support for an accreditation scheme is central to long-term success. Kerby and Weber (2000) and Gass (1993) consider that a voluntary process based on audits conducted by peers is also important. The construction of the accreditation model was based on it being a voluntary performance management system evaluated periodically and audited by peers.

It was considered that the model, whilst comprehensive, needed to be made simpler. It was felt that minimum standards needed to be applied initially to gain acceptance and engagement of funeral firms. It was also felt that the model should be phased in over a period of time and any process of inspection/audit would need to be examined by fully trained surveyors who had prior experience with the industry. Similarly, implementation would require extensive explanatory sessions to AFDA member firms, so they could understand how to utilise the model. It might be appropriate to adopt a process similar to the health sector where it was possible to confer provisional accreditation on the basis that targeted inadequacies are corrected within a specific time period.

Health sector interviewees as well as the literature stressed the importance of the training of industry surveyors thereby ensuring that there is a consistency of evaluation across all sites to minimise any biases or differences. The panel supported the findings from the literature in
relation to organisational effectiveness and strongly agreed regarding the characteristics of ideal surveyors (i.e., well experienced and respected within the industry).

5.3.3 Symbolic Meanings

The researcher examined the interview data in light of the abstract or symbolic meanings that could emerge, further strengthening the recommendations made in this research report. As a participant observer and armed with insider knowledge it was evident that there may have been indirect meanings in some of the interviewees responses. Interviewees responses may have been interpreted as being deliberately obscure or, alternatively, unwilling to disclose their concerns (i.e., under the surface, ‘shadow’ issues, such as resistance to change, can manifest itself in various ways).

Key themes emerging within this symbolic meaning perspective are:

- Resistance to change
- Quality
- Compliance and cost issues

5.3.3.1 Resistance to Change

When some expert panel members from larger firms said the model was too onerous for small firms, they may have implied it was too onerous for them. This ‘big brother approach’ was at odds with the views of the respondents from the smaller firms who rejected the inferences made on their behalf. These may have an expression of the inability of smaller firms to manage the complexity of detail as a means of pushing accreditation to the side because of cost and compliance issues. In stating their support, respondents from smaller firm could have been unaware of the cost and compliance issues involved in making a commitment to the process of accreditation. However, it is evident in the interview data that respondents from smaller firms embraced the need for quality and equity in respect of performance standards across the Funeral Industry regardless of the size of firms. Respondents from smaller firms rejected the idea that there should be a different gauge of measurement for smaller and larger firms. The inference in this rejection of the two level measurement system (i.e., large and small) was possible due to an egalitarian ideal that all members of an industry are of equal status. Respondent Three felt strongly that different levels of accreditation could be harmful
to industry cohesiveness. This insight concurs with Burnett (2004) who stated that industry associations were central to the adoption of the accreditation process. If this concept is further extrapolated, the inference would be that groups within the AFDA might feel to be of unequal status within the association.

Three of the respondents (One, Two and Seven) considered that the idea of accreditation was not onerous and that all firms regardless of size should have the same standards. Respondent One stated that, “All funeral directors should have the same core values, commitment to service, be financially sound and understand industry requirements and the community.” Two of these three respondents were from small and medium firms in country Victoria. This indicates a huge level of commitment from these smaller firms, which might not have been expected on the basis of comments made by other interviewees on their behalf. Respondents from larger firms suggested that smaller firms would reject or at least step back from the accreditation process.

Respondent One stated, “There’s always going to be different levels of support for change and it’s up to the industry leaders to first embrace change and improve themselves, but also improve those around them”. This is a key point because to implement the accreditation change leaders within the AFDA will need to take up the challenge and mentor other member firms in the process. Any change, particularly of the magnitude of the provisional model, requires strong support of key AFDA leaders. Similarly, Respondent Six stated, “There needs to be a preparedness to change and adapt. Competency needs to be there from day one, but companies that can evolve and adapt have survived and prospered. Those with the castle surrounded by a moat outlook have struggled. They struggle because they are not adaptable.”

Barnett (2004) remarks that industry associations that present a united front and speak with a single voice shape opinion. Similarly, Nadkarni and Narayanan (2004) indicate that emerging themes in relation to industry strategy are about change and quality management. Based on the health sector’s experience, there will likely be a reluctance to adopt an accreditation process based on additional compliance. Any implementation process needs to counter this resistance and a potential loss of AFDA membership.

The nature of organisations today dictates that they be dynamic, diverse and fluid, and suggests that an accreditation model must be closely aligned to organisational theory (see Section 2.1).
Gass (1993) stressed the importance of consistency of the way standards were applied to small and large entities. Respondent Six considered that, “all standards should be the same or otherwise it would make the assessment process more difficult and inherently political”. This comment was most insightful, as it alluded to the political difficulties inherent in assessment criteria if standards are different for different sized firms. This issue also confronted the health sector during their development of an accreditation process. Different sized hospitals in metropolitan and country areas resolved to have similar standards across the sector, regardless of the size of the hospital to be accredited.

Two respondents from the expert panel, although in general agreement with the content of the model, felt strongly that the business systems and risk management elements should be excluded from the model. The researcher does not accept these views as the literature and the experiences of the health sector strongly indicated that to be organisationally effective, these two elements needed to be incorporated in the model. Their exclusion would diminish the effectiveness of the accreditation model and therefore they were retained. The two respondents suggested concentrating on the minimum standards identified by the Licensing Committee about transport, storage, infection control and care of the deceased. There is evidence of lag in the Funeral Industry vis-à-vis contemporary business practice and organisational theory. The Funeral Industry and the health sector both represent traditional and conservative human services industries. These are slow to change and often lag behind the management practices of other industries. They do not see the need to change to contemporary business practices.

The symbolic meaning embedded in the rejection by two respondents of certain aspects of the model indicates that the two interviewees were seeking to retain the status quo rather than put their firms’ competitive position at risk. They attempted to control any change that may be forced upon them, by choosing to lend their support for specific elements of the model.

Five of the seven expert panel members supporting the model had reservations about it “being a bit too rigorous for some of the smaller companies”. At least one member of the panel (Respondent Six) may have had some insight into the meaning behind comments of his fellow panel members when he said, “any accreditation model has to be pretty straightforward or you may get resistance”. The researcher was aware of this trade-off of introducing complexity in the model and being rigorous. A certain degree of complexity is imperative even though there might have to be a trade-off in ease of use.
In one instance Respondent Six stated he feared that the accreditation process would make firms clones of one another. This clearly illustrates the lag in understanding, by some senior industry members, about how to interpret benchmarks and indices. Conversely, the respondent may feel that the surveyor may have considerable power (e.g., to change the hierarchical structure within the industry) and also the ability to be able to indirectly influence competition within the marketplace. In summary, this respondent viewed accreditation as a threat that might challenge his firm’s position within the industry. An experienced surveyor would interpret benchmarks for individual firms to accommodate variations in context. The accreditation process implemented in this way could enhance the performance and effectiveness of various firms, small and large alike, without making firms clones of one another.

### 5.3.3.2 Quality

One might assume from listening to the responses from members of the expert panel about quality and standards that each of the members was on a level playing field regarding the level of service provided. However, insider knowledge indicates that the interviewees represented firms that delivered varied levels and types of service. It is clear that a manifestly shared perception was that they were all equal in their professional interests. Viewed within the context of the full interview the symbolic meaning may indicate that there is higher affinity between certain members of the panel and other members of the panel between all members of the panel and the remainder of the membership of the AFDA, and / or between the AFDA membership and the remainder of the Funeral Industry (i.e., clan vs. non-clan).

There was a perception that there were differences between how the Funeral Industry and customers viewed the quality of funeral practices. It was generally accepted by the Funeral Industry that firms believed that they had a captive customer base and that firms competed among themselves for greater market share.

The respondents view of customers is that they were purchasing a product, and their perception of funeral service was one of a package that they had to choose and purchase at some point in time. The customer is frequently looking for a recognisable symbol as an indication of quality that conveys and helps them to make informed decisions about the choice of a preferred funeral provider. In making choices among alternatives, certain logos give the customer higher levels of confidence. There are divergent views between the Funeral
Industry and customers concerning what constitutes value for money. For the Funeral Industry the investment in accreditation would be risk taking in the anticipation of market share growth.

There are disparate views on what constitutes ‘quality’, the worth of quality to firms and the general public. Less expensive services don’t necessarily equate with lower quality standards.

The respondents inferred that cheaper funeral services provide lower quality standards. Some customers choose lower cost funeral providers for a number of reasons (i.e., economic or philosophical). Some lower cost funeral providers provide a value for money approach.

Diversity in how the quality imperative is applied across funeral firms of all sizes was seen as problematic. Quality is a principle, and a pillar of the accreditation model, which takes different forms. This diversity of outcomes enhances competition as firms develop processes as alternative packages to obtain their desired outcomes (i.e., increased market share). Diversity in quality manifests itself in marketing and how funeral firms develop various packages and services to attract a customer base. Competition is heightened, and one aspect of this growth is innovation, another pillar of the accreditation model.

Magd and Curry (2003) suggested that organisations could not afford to ignore the strategic implication of quality for their competitive position. The importance of the accreditation model is that it strengthens the quality driver as part of a firm’s competitive strategy. Bharadwag et al. (1993) and Mohamed (2003) suggest that organisational culture and performance could also have significant positive economic value for firms. Robson and Prabhu (2001) and Forker (1996) suggest that critical measures of success in meeting customer needs and gaining a competitive advantage relate to quality.

Accreditation provides a level of assurance about quality standards to a range of disparate groups such as clients, governments, unions and special interest groups. Compliance with such items as public health matters, safety in the workplace and protection of investment in pre-paid funeral moneys helps to meet these guarantees around quality. The findings of this study supports Hurst’s (1997) view about accreditation’s increasing popularity being about raised quality awareness (see Section 2.2.1). The interviewees’ responses did not support the literature at this stage, but the model did. This is a significant finding.

A number of senior members of the expert panel would argue that a firm’s brand indicates that their product is equivalent to a promise of quality. The quality notion behind the brand and its identity is a symbolic meaning that the customer understands in the marketplace. The
reality is that each member of the expert panel knows about the other firms’ operations (i.e. do they deliver quality or do they just espouse it?). One respondent named a large metropolitan firm other than his own as a leader within the industry. In making this statement the respondent gave recognition of this firm’s reputational status. This insight is symbolic of the belief system around the brand and logo of firms.

5.3.3.3 Compliance and Cost Issues

The issue of compliance and costs was a sensitive one and the subject matter heightened the atmosphere of the discussions.

A challenge exists for the Funeral Industry association, driving the accreditation process, to be able to justify a value for money approach and return on investment for participant firms (i.e. sell the accreditation concept). The challenge is that service and staff levels are likely to increase as the result of the accreditation process, and the cost of these improvements will need to be borne by the owners of those firms. Ongoing accreditation, concurrent with growth in competition, is likely to lead to increased costs. It is likely that business owners may be reticent to take on the cost burden of accreditation. The AFDA will need to develop a strategy to counter this tendency.

The symbolic meaning of these cost issues indicates a general reluctance of firms to fully embrace the accreditation process. Interviewees from major metropolitan firms could understand the possibility of changes in the market place and their impact on their own firms’ financial status with potential loss of market share. The fact that full financial implications were not known was evident in the free-floating anxiety within the responses of the participants.

The spectre of Government regulation occurs when industries have low standards. Nakdami and Narayanan (2004) explain how firms within an industry come together when threatened by outside environmental matters such as Government regulations. The licensing issue in Victoria is one such example.

The researcher observes that AFDA members appear reluctant to support higher standards for their industry due to higher compliance requirements, compared with minimum standards. This indicates that in the implementation of an accreditation model, minimum licensing standards may need to be the commencing point.
Some resistance to higher standards can be anticipated because accreditation will increase compliance requirements and workloads of all firms. According to Magd and Curry (2003), quality improvement is an iterative process, facilitated by frequent monitoring, updating and revising of strategies. Respondent Four stated, “Some clients are happy with the poorer standards we know are on offer from certain companies, but are we happy for that for the industry? We should be able to open the door for all aspects of the company to prove credibility.” This respondent inferred that some consumers might choose based primarily on price. The symbolic meanings of these comments could indicate an awareness of some of the existing larger metropolitan firms that were charging higher prices and not providing requisite services to match. The respondent suggested a transparent process where the public could examine and compare the pricing structure of his company compared to his competitors. This may have been a means of gaining a competitive advantage for his own firm, based on his price structure and customers’ perceived value for money.

5.3.4 Motives and Rules

A reluctance was observed by the interviewees to commit fully to the concept of accreditation. This hesitancy may have been related to the threat of a loss of competitive advantage within the funeral industry if higher quality standards were espoused by competitors.

The expert panel, whilst generous with their own insights, were nevertheless guarded. The researcher noted a reluctance at times to elaborate on some key issues (e.g., the need for higher quality standards). This withholding behaviour also led to some respondents’ rejection of quality on the basis of costs of compliance, rather than exploring quality issues in a more candid fashion. An alternative tactic was the rejection of external control (“I don’t want to be told what to do”) or the owner’s concern about a new commitment to a major change that could be onerous.

Some key themes emerging were:

- Withholding behaviours, and
- Manifest concerns about implementation issues.
5.3.4.1 Withholding Behaviours

There was an understated and highly charged level of politicisation and duality around the accreditation issue. The researcher observed evidence of dissonance between the respondents regarding the pace of industry change. On the one hand, respondents clearly saw the need for change and for a focus on quality outcomes that could be measured through accreditation. On the other hand, they realised the impacts these measures would have on their own firms’ financial position. This ‘shadow side’, as it is referred to by Kilmann (1989), produced a duality of stated and unstated positions. In public, the respondents supported the need for the quality imperative. Below the surface, their strategy appeared to be to delay the introduction of the provisional model for as long as possible.

A key problem evident from the individual interviews is the interviewees’ involvement, on one hand, as experts in the industry, and on the other, as people responsible for supporting the interests of their own firms. Panel members were acutely aware of the fact that their firms’ competitive advantage might be threatened, or at risk if the accreditation model was implemented. One respondent addressed the looming risk to his firm by making statements strongly objecting to accreditation surveyors telling him how he should run his business.

There was some disagreement within the panel about the level of standards required for funeral firms. The major consensus was that the model, although well focused and rigorous, was too complex for smaller firms to fully understand and, more importantly, too costly to implement. This underlying issue of compliance and higher costs linked to compliance was a major area of tension. Three of the respondents who represented the three largest metropolitan firms, were very concerned about the implications of the accreditation process. Their concern appeared to be equivalent to those of the representatives of smaller firms. Industry associations and governments need to be aware of the cost of implementing quality standards if the accreditation principles are to be accepted by large and small firms.

Respondents were aware of the potential to control the rule system and the advantage of retaining that control. Comments about the pace of industry change and the level of standards required could indicate some of the motives of the expert panel. These may revolve around utilising rules within the industry to slow the pace of the reform. Most respondents fully realised the financial and compliance issues could have a detrimental effect on their sustainability. Expressions of concerns over the level of standards may have been a tactic and had a dual purpose of:
- Slowing the pace of the industry change, and
- Ensuring that any standards were of a minimalist nature.

These concerns indicate that any rules to be put in place regarding the implementation of the accreditation model may have to be minimalist in order to slow the pace of industry reform.

5.3.4.2 Manifest Concerns about Implementation Issues

The expert panel of senior members of the funeral industry accepted the provisional model as comprehensive, rigorous and all encompassing. However, they did express concerns about the model being too detailed. Despite their concerns, there was no out-and-out rejection of the model.

Most respondents considered that the provisional model should be introduced over a period of time. Respondent Two expressed a contrary view based on his own experience as a health sector board member, saying that, “I would introduce the accreditation model all at once and not graduate it in, but give them three years to become compliant”. Respondent Four represented the dominant view, stating that, “the model needs to be implemented over a staged period of time, with some grand-parenting clauses for existing firms”. He also said that, “many small and medium firm owners have limited business experience and there would be time needed to comply with the standards”.

Level of detail and periods of time for the implementation of the model were discussed in the previous section (i.e., mutual perceptions). These issues might also be indicative of motives of the respondents. Rules applied to the implementation process and the staging of the process over a period of years, could be considered to slow the pace of industry change.

The issue of the level of detail in the provisional model and the time frame over which it should be implemented generated discussion. The proposed model was considered by many of the panel members to be too rigorous for the smaller firms and it was felt that the model needed to be simpler or it would meet resistance. Respondent Six stated his main concern was that, “there was too much information for people to get comfortable with”. The ramifications of this observation are discussed in Chapter Six (see Section 6.4.3). Contrasting views exist about whether the process should be implemented all at once or over a number of years. However, the interviewees shared a similar view about the need for an educative process. It is important for the industry to understand that, while some respondents may have disparate
views about the pace of implementation being slowed through grand-parenting clauses. The industry needs to speak with one voice and have a shared perspective on this issue.

### 5.4 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter reported and analysed the data, as it specifically related to the research questions. The chapter detailed the interviews with senior representatives and expert panel members from the Funeral Industry (see Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3).

Responses given by the interviewees provided insights into the views of senior Funeral Industry members, in relation to their understanding of accreditation and the key drivers that make funeral firms organisationally effective.

Interview data were analysed through an abductive strategy. The researcher was able to give an insider view of the funeral industry as a participant observer and add vigour to the findings by applying and utilising three different perspectives:

- Mutual perceptions
- Symbolic meanings
- Motives and rules

The next and final chapter explores the outputs of the study, contributions to practice and limitations of the research. Implications of the findings of this chapter are discussed in relation to the industry and research in general, together with future directions and recommendations.
Chapter Six

Summary and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Previous chapters in this research report demonstrate the progressive development of the draft accreditation model. This chapter provides a summary and conclusion to the research project. There is an emphasis on outputs of the study, contributions to practice and limitations of the research and some comments are made about future directions and recommendations. Chapter One established the context of the research project, explaining the objectives, motives and organisation of the thesis. The background of the funeral industry and the emergence of the quality imperative, from licensing to accreditation, were also discussed.

A review of the literature in Chapter Two arrived at an account of the current state of knowledge concerning the factors which contribute to organisational effectiveness and exemplars, and that account enabled the researcher to construct a provisional accreditation model based upon the central concepts found in the literature.

Chapter Three explained the development and construction of the provisional accreditation model. An overview of the resources applied in the construction of the provisional model and how it was created and refined was provided.

Chapter Four outlined the research methodology and the aim of constructing an illuminative account of the organisational world as understood by a group of expert members of the Funeral Industry in Victoria. This research approach elicited informed opinion from the group about important standards and how they should be measured within the industry.

The research findings in Chapter Five validate the draft accreditation model that was developed. The draft accreditation model was examined through an interview process against the detailed analysis of the data collected from the Licensing Committee, the expert funeral panel and experts from the health sector. This chapter highlights outputs of the study and establishes the context for recommendations for further research in this concluding chapter.
The main purpose of the research was an exploration of the literature on organisational effectiveness in conjunction with an exploration of the view of expert practitioners. This enabled the researcher to construct an accreditation model aimed at ensuring high quality funeral service provision. Central to pursuing that purpose was the development of clear, consistent and measurable standards that are relevant to the delivery of effective, high quality funeral service provision.

The three primary objectives of this research have been to ascertain:

- The major challenges that face funeral service providers that should drive an accreditation model for funeral firms in Victoria;
- The major success factors in becoming organisationally effective; and
- Why the identified factors are important and how they underpin the development of an accreditation model.

The researcher answered the primary research objectives that have been set out above. It has been possible to develop an instrument that measures quality standards for the funeral industry (see Appendix One). Chapter Three shows in detail how the provisional model was constructed from the literature (Chapter Two), and provides the comments of the external and internal experts. The provisional model incorporates the challenges of organisational effectiveness.

The provisional accreditation model has been enriched and improved by reconsideration in the light of the views of expert industry practitioners. This chapter discusses:

- Contributions to practice, limitations of the research;
- The research findings;
- Recommendations for further research and; and
- The core research questions.

### 6.2 Limitations of the Research

Time constraints, researcher bias and the inability to make generalisations from such a study limit the generalisability of some of the findings of the research. The research project is a single industry case study and as such the findings may not be applicable to industries in different contexts or situations. The research limited the interviews to firms based in Victoria.
If it were extended to other Australian States, the findings may be different or not applicable to some standards outlined in the accreditation model. For instance, Queensland has a very different cost structure in relation to funeral margins and profitability compared to Victoria. Issues relating to additional cost burdens may meet with heightened resistance in relation to the accreditation process. Due to the small number of participants interviewed, it may be argued that the research lacks sufficient number of participants, but because the respondents were experts in their fields, the findings are undeniably significant and beneficial.

Time constraints mitigated against the model being critiqued by outside groups, the expert panel made up of funeral directors of course being an ‘inside’ group. An outside group of other key stakeholders would have added further insights to the findings of the research project. Interviews with the funeral industry expert panel were exploratory and investigatory. Although the panel consisted of key people who represented large, medium and small funeral firms, the sample size of the group was not large.

Although the research identified the key characteristics of organisational effectiveness which underpinned the development of the accreditation model, the topic of organisational effectiveness is wide ranging and has many variables.

For the purpose of this project, the researcher selected specific literature and from this literature findings that were relevant to the field and had a high degree of fit. Another researcher could have selected alternative literature and could have created an alternative model. There is the possibility that other models could be created. If another model were proposed in the future, the researcher’s model would need to be successfully defended. Using an expert reference group, although with its acknowledged imperfections, was the best available approach for this research project. A further consideration is that there may be a tendency for some expert panel members with vested interests to maintain a strategic advantage by responding in a particular manner.

The research project sought to enrich and improve the draft accreditation model by reconsidering it in light of the findings about the views of expert industry practitioners. Nevertheless, given that this thesis seeks to explore, describe, understand and investigate the major characteristics of the funeral industry, as understood by a group of its representatives, these limitations do not detract from its significance. The researcher identified and acknowledged some of the weaknesses of this approach to the research project. The advantage of utilising direct feedback from expert practitioners is considerable, despite the
acknowledged potential for bias. The richness of the evidence offsets the limitations of bias introduced by the respondents.

6.3 Contributions to Practice

This research project makes a significant contribution to knowledge about the funeral industry in Victoria. Major characteristics and success factors are uncovered and elements that are important in measuring quality are validated. These are detailed in Section 2.4.

The researcher has highlighted the need for an industry-based accreditation model to be linked more directly to organisational theory, rather than standards being developed solely on the basis of practitioner knowledge. A specific rationale is the lack of understanding in the funeral industry about the holistic nature of quality performance management. Industry experts confirmed that the proposed standards and framework are appropriate. This is the first funeral framework developed by one of the industry's own practitioners, i.e. the researcher, that can be applied in a systematic manner. The detail behind the standards is linked directly to the literature on organisational effectiveness and has been validated through a rigorous methodological process of interviews with senior industry representatives.

The provisional model, which has been acknowledged by the expert panel as a comprehensive framework of the industry, provides an holistic overview of the elements of funeral service provisions. Some of the new entrants to the industry and some of the larger firms could use the basis of the provisional model as a check list of areas of focus from a risk management perspective.

This research project demonstrates that it is possible to develop an instrument that has the potential to measure standards for the funeral industry within Australia. This alone says that it is a significant piece of research.

According to Winter et al. (2000) to meet the requirements of doctoral level research, one must be able to make a contribution to knowledge that is new and significant. Bareham et al. (2000) suggest that DBA research is expected to “make a contribution to the enhancement and development of professional practice in their chosen areas” (p. 398), and similarly that, “The DBA is intended to demonstrate that the candidate has developed the capacity to make an original contribution to knowledge of the practice of management” (p. 398). This research
project has been enriched and validated by in-depth qualitative interviews with a panel of funeral and health sector experts.

Findings indicate that a key success factor of the model is how successfully it is introduced and implemented. The research also has implications for how accreditation models should be implemented and confirms that it should be a phased process. First, it should focus on training and education for industry members, to gain their voluntary consent and buy-in to the process, and then its measurement, monitoring and ongoing evaluation.

The research is significant as it has implications for funeral industry practices throughout Victoria, Australia and ultimately, internationally. The model can be applied by funeral firms to measure and improve their own services to the consumer. A tool has been produced that can provide guidance for funeral firm managers to monitor performance and standards in response to changing and challenging customer needs in a constantly changing consumer environment. The accreditation model is important as a means of achieving improved outcomes for the customer and the community at large.

6.4 Findings

6.4.1 Introduction

When the data were distilled from Chapter Five for observations, four themes emerged. Each of these themes appears to be a significant finding within the confines of funeral practice. The four findings pertain to:

- Model construction
- Implementation
- Value of accreditation
- Transferability of the model and leadership within the funeral industry

This section describes these four findings.

6.4.2 The Model

It has been demonstrated that a funeral accreditation model can be developed from organisational theory, combined with the advice of practitioners from the funeral industry.
The researcher was able to construct and create a working model, that is, an original contribution to practice, for the funeral industry. This novated structure brings together theory, with evidence based on practice, from internal and external experts, to create an instrument that incorporates organisational theory. The model is presented in Appendix One).

There was no clear understanding by the expert panel of the difference between accreditation and licensing. The majority of respondents considered accreditation required higher levels of standards than the minimum standards required by licensing. However, in spite of underlying concerns about costly compliance issues by panel members, no apparent thought had been given to (a) the need for a systematic process being introduced that measured standards in a consistent way across the industry, or (b) the ramifications of firms of not meeting these standards.

The provisional model was developed from the literature about the major success factors driving organisational effectiveness. There was unanimous agreement that the model was comprehensive, reflected by Respondent One who stated, “There doesn’t seem to be anything missing, it’s fairly exhaustive”. There was concern from some members that the model was initially difficult to grasp, but as Respondent Three stated, “I did eventually see the pattern of the four standards coming through”. Similarly, Respondent Six said, “It’s very thorough and comprehensive and when you work it through, it does make sense”.

The main concerns centred around costs, as the panel perceived higher standards would mean higher compliance costs. This concern was also reflected by Yunker (2000) who considered that accreditation bred inefficiency and sounded better in theory than it worked in practice. Similarly, Harris and Jago (2001) stated that a downside of making accreditation a more rigorous process is the possibility that fewer people will be willing to commit the time and effort that is required. Bourke and Smith (1998) also refer to the need for evaluations of a cost benefit analysis, due to the considerable amount of staff time and money spent on accreditation, to ascertain whether it was a justified return on investment.

The issue of cost, whilst raised as an underlying issue, seemed to be accepted as a necessary part of the accreditation process. The acceptance of an additional cost item to funeral service providers was best summed up by Respondent Two who stated, “accreditation can be costly, but I don’t think it’s too big a cost for funeral firms, you don’t see too many poor firms”. Similarly Respondent Three said, “There are extra costs and every firm is going to have an increase in costs”. The literature addressed some of these concerns; according to Yunker (2000), accreditation can waste time, breed inefficiency and create pointless paperwork.
Barker and Smith (1998) cautioned that due to the considerable amounts of time and money spent on accreditation, there needs to be an evaluation of the costs and benefits to ascertain whether it is a justified return on investment.

Feedback from the field served to refine the model, although critique of the model indicated the need for a few minor changes. These were identified and incorporated in the model. (These suggestions were coloured in blue; see Appendix One.) Substantive comments were made in relation to implementation issues.

6.4.3 Implementation Issues

The literature suggests that accreditation models need to be linked directly to organisational theory. Research needs to be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the accreditation process in meeting required standards. This research project addresses the anticipated resistance from firms of all sizes, due to the impact that this change may have on their own firm’s position in the market place.

The anticipated barriers to implementation, whilst not a focus of this research project, do not reduce the importance of this finding. An obstacle to the acceptance of the provisional model is the amount of detail in its various elements. By necessity, all these elements need to be included for practitioners of funeral services. The interviewees acknowledged this point and whilst the summary of the four standards presents a simplified overview of the model, the next two levels of the model, the six drivers and the four-tier rating measurement system, incorporate more complex layers of evidence.

The value of the expert panel lay not only in the suggestions about improvements to the model, but also in comments about how the model should be implemented by funeral practitioners themselves. This issue is further discussed in the future directions and recommendations suggested by the researcher in this chapter (see 6.5.2)

The accreditation process takes place within a social context. Acceleration of the accreditation process would ensure a greater level of professionalism, with or without the blessing of senior members of the funeral industry. This is likely to lead to better defined career paths and status for those employed in the industry. The industry has been slow to respond, but a well-designed provisional model and the process of accreditation can accelerate the movement
towards a higher level of professionalism. The literature (see 2.4) validates this. An educative process of professional development for AFDA personnel would assist in this process.

6.4.4 Value of the Accreditation Process

The accreditation process would undeniably enhance the industry by reducing the lag in quality management and assisting in moving the thinking of industry practitioners in areas such quality and event management. As new benchmarks are established, organisations adapt and change to meet new levels of performance. This is demonstrated by the development of unique packages and products in a competitive market. The accreditation process supports a change in attitude and provides for benchmarks in the industry previously not contemplated. The accreditation process also encourages a writing and measurement culture.

One of the challenges facing the industry is the shift to lower staff levels simultaneous with rising consumer expectations. This is particularly a concern for the large publicly listed funeral companies, whose expectation is to make profits for shareholders, yet at the same time expecting to cut costs and grow volumes and revenues. This problem was summarised by Respondent One who stated, “current staff levels are running at the same levels we had five years ago, but the demands in the last five years are that we have doubled our workload. Some firms have cut their staff levels twenty per cent in that period – how can they sustain their level of service with reduced numbers?”

Respondent six stated “I see changing consumer expectations as a major concern. There is a move from seeing the funeral as a ritual to seeing it as an event, which requires highly creative and organised staff who are different from the typical personnel in the funeral industry. Funerals are becoming events requiring event management with a huge challenge to organise them in three or so days.” Another respondent stated, “Customers are our concern. Consumerism is a reality and so we need to keep raising the bar.”

This respondent’s comment is confirmed by Wolfelt (2001) who wrote about the implications of the experience economy in relation to baby boomers. These consumers now consider funerals as events. The value of the draft accreditation model is that as consumers’ expectations rise, certainly those of the baby boomers, a systematic process is needed to measure results because quality standards are rising in relation to consumers’ expectations. The importance of the accreditation model is that it gives consumers confidence that quality issues are being addressed in a structured and systemised way.
One of the significant contributions the accreditation model makes to the funeral industry is a rigorous framework to ensure that systems are being monitored effectively. This point was referred to by Respondent B who said that, “the main characteristic that makes organisations effective is strong leadership, with a framework to ensure systems are being monitored effectively”. Araratunga and Baldry (2003) support this point when they refer to the need for integration between the various areas of the business to be effective. Similarly, Khoo and Tan (2002) claim that systems thinking enables an understanding of how events are connected to each other.

Senge (1990) supports these concerns when discussing why organisations need to think in terms of processes and structures and how systems thinking enables an understanding of how events are connected to each other. According to Wierzbicki (2005), the accreditation process is in essence a CQI process which combines an assessment of the processes with an assessment of the system.

An advantage of the model is that it is a training tool in itself. Additionally, the professional association, in the view of many of the expert panel, could take charge of the application of the model and accreditation process. This would enhance their value and role within the funeral industry.

The funeral industry is lagging in its stated objective of promoting professionalism. The anticipated resistance (based on the expert panel comments; see Table 2.2) of senior industry people to promote and use the tool and instruments of the provisional model is bewildering, particularly as these tools are in common use in similar industries, such as the health sector. In supporting the inclusion of risk management as a separate standard within the provisional model, Respondent Two declared that, “Risk management was a most important area and most funeral directors aren’t prepared and don’t monitor their risks constantly”. Hubbard et al. (2002) argued that an attribute of successful firms is making decisive, consistent decisions with a long-term view, pointing to the need to understand the variety of risks and how to manage these risks. In the construction of the model, the importance of risk management was recognised by a separate funeral standard being allocated directly to this issue.

Concern was expressed about ongoing OHS issues and the subsequent costs of compliance and about union involvement in standard practices. Risk management was seen as significant due to increased litigation by families and staff for emotional trauma. As Respondent One stated, “an apology is no longer accepted by clients for accidents and mistakes, there are more demands for compensation”. Similarly, Respondent Six stated, “compensation for staff
concerning psychological injury, such as emotional trauma from seeing a motor vehicle accident victim, is becoming a concern”. However, Artto and Hawk (1999) suggest that a customer orientation in a business environment requires the taking of risks.

The appropriate approach to risk management is a holistic and integrated view rather than a fragmented and less than comprehensive approach. Risk management does not just include infection control or occupational health and safety issues; there are other elements which need to be examined in detail. Within the funeral industry, as in other industries, new kinds of risks emerge almost on a weekly basis and responses have to be formulated. The accreditation model examines risk management in totality and, looking to the future, allows for new risks to be monitored and evaluated with a focus on action items.

Risk management incorporates what is in place currently, risks at any given time, compliance issues, as well as addressing changes that are required. The accreditation model is future focused as it requires organisations to be prepared and be able to manage risks, now and into the future.

6.4.5 Transferability and Leadership

The model has been deliberately constructed with direct links to organisational theory. This adds strength to the model, increasing its worth and practicality for measuring and managing organisational effectiveness. It also increases the potential transferability of the model, across a variety of industry sectors. The accreditation model may provide a useful framework of measuring standards in industries having some characteristics in common with the funeral industry. Further research would be needed in this area.

In the construction of the model, the researcher reviewed evaluation frameworks and in particular Kaplan and Norton’s (1992) BSC, as it provided a simple-to-understand tool that could be utilised in complex situations to establish frameworks to measure identified outcomes against strategic objectives. Its application and acceptance in a number of diverse industries (Inamdar et al., 2000; Mohamed, 2003; Zelman, 2003) indicates its importance as a means of effective measurement.

This need for adaptability was a key point incorporated in the construction of the model, supported by Collins and Porras (1994), Collins (2001), Hubbard et al. (2002) and Egan (1993), who suggested that the firms that will survive and prosper will be those that confront
change and create the future by adapting rapidly. “I think we learn more by benchmarking from outside the funeral industry and adapting to suit our needs/requirements”, stated Respondent Six.

For funeral firms to remain organisationally effective they need systems in place to be able to measure the level of service they are providing to the consumer. This project’s accreditation model allows them to do this, by meeting the needs for an industry tool to measure standards.

These comments are reinforced by theories of organisational effectiveness, specifically that of de Waal (2004), who stated that many organisations externally benchmark to compare their own processes to similar processes of other successful organisations, in the search for best practices that lead to superior performance. Each standard in the construction of the accreditation model was assessed against a four-tier rating system, and benchmarking best practice against other organisations is included in the accreditation model.

On the question of benchmarking, the panel was able to add value regarding transferability of the model by identifying what were appropriate external comparison organisations, such as the hospitality and health sectors. Van der Wiele and Brown (2002), Ovretveit (1997) and Calingo (1996) all refer to the need for quality to be benchmarked across competitors in the industry, as well as comparisons made to other industries. It was considered difficult to benchmark within the industry because of its smaller size and because of commercial in-confidence issues. However, external industries, such as hospitality, hotels and tourism all provide comfort, service and caring personal services that could be comparable external benchmark industries. Some respondents considered that overseas funeral firms, particularly in Canada and America, could be used to benchmark Australian firms.

Respondents’ comments concerning profitability and economies of scale were supported by theories of organisational effectiveness, specifically Johnson (2004), Combe and Botschen (2004), Van der Wiele and Brown (2002) and Calingo (1996) who argued that in implementing any quality management system an organisation needs to transform itself to one that is flexible, adaptive, innovative, responsive and value-adding. These concepts about being responsive were adopted from the literature in the construction of the model and emphasised by the comments of the expert panel.

The rigour and validity of the provisional model proved that the methodology applied to this research project worked. It would appear the findings might be applied across industries. Literature on organisational theory and modelling has highlighted adaptability across industry
sectors and funeral firms overseas. This finding is significant. Although the model refers directly to the funeral industry, the key drivers of organisational effectiveness are generic across organisations. Taking into account the potential for transferability, the Australian funeral industry is presented with an opportunity to grasp an international leadership position in relation to quality and standards and their measurement within the funeral industry.

6.5 Future Directions and Recommendations

6.5.1 Introduction

This section relates to the findings of this research project (see Table 6.1) and the future directions and recommendations. Table 6.1 outlines the future directions indicated by the four future directions in column one of Table 6.1 which makes recommendations under two areas, a) the funeral industry and b) research in general.

One importance of this research project is that it provides a number of opportunities for future research. The insights gained from this case study provide a basis for further studies to ascertain whether these findings apply beyond the funeral industry in this state, and whether the findings could be adapted to benefit other industries in need of accreditation.

This research project represents a snapshot of what an expert panel considered the key characteristics of organisational effectiveness in relation to a funeral industry model. These views may change over time. Further research is required on a longitudinal basis to study how the model was implemented and evaluated and how it evolves over a longer period of time.

Chapter Two presented a review of the literature to arrive at an account of the current state of knowledge concerning the factors which account for organisational effectiveness and exemplars relevant to the modelling of accreditation. This review enabled the researcher to construct a provisional accreditation model.

This section of the chapter has been framed in terms of discrete findings about the draft model. The researcher considers that they are significant because:

- They have been critiqued and validated by internal and external experts;
- They have been constructed on pre-existing examples of organisational theory;
- They have the potential for transferability across other industries;
- They have been confirmed by experts in the field as contributing to a model;
• They represent the current work conditions of the funeral industry;
• The findings could make a difference if implemented;
• An innovated model for the funeral industry had not existed previously; and
• There are indications that resistance may occur.

The literature review uncovered six key drivers of organisational effectiveness that underpinned the construction of the provisional accreditation model (i.e., Leadership, Human Resources, Quality, Information Systems, Compliance and Innovation and Change). Each of these six drivers of organisational effectiveness was applied across the four funeral standards of the provisional accreditation model. The purpose was to drive the emergence of a more efficient and quality-driven industry, with an emphasis on continuous improvement.

This iterative process between findings underpinned the development of the draft accreditation model. It was clear that a simplified, working model (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002) would be helpful for representing the essence or process of the complex phenomena comprising organisational performance. This iterative process allowed for:

• The selection of elements included in the initial model, and
• A critique of the provisional model.

The process of developing the accreditation tool has been significant. Internal and external experts have shown goodwill by working effectively together with the researcher to critique the provisional model. This demonstrates the willingness and goodwill of the practitioners to improve the funeral industry. The remainder of this section outlines the recommendations for future directions as summarised below in Table 6.1. These recommendations draw on the findings of Chapter Five.
Table 6.1: Recommendations for Future Directions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Directions</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Accreditation Model</td>
<td>a) <strong>The Funeral Industry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Implementation Issues</td>
<td>* The accreditation model should be introduced with ratification from the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Adding value through Accreditation</td>
<td>* The model should first be introduced as a pilot program auspiced by the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transferability and Leadership</td>
<td>* Roll-out of the model, should incorporate schedules for:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• voluntary phasing in with grandparenting clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• training and education for industry members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a process of audits by peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• training and selection of industry surveyors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• development of an accreditation manual for surveyors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• regular refinement and updating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* The professional association should position itself to embrace a leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>role within Australia and internationally, focusing on higher standards and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quality performance monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) <strong>Research in General</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Explore further evidence of the link between theory and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Research indicators about how large and small firms adapt to the challenges of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accreditation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Research areas of commonality among human services industries, to uncover for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transferability potential.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5.2 The Funeral Industry

The accreditation model should be introduced with ratification from the industry.

The Victorian Government has recently legislated for licensing of funeral service providers. This legislative framework has created the potential to impose penalties for non-compliance. These could be applied to the preliminary stage of an accreditation process. The draft model introduces measurement standards that need to be met. If they are not met, the opportunity now exists to apply penalties for non-compliance. The licensing legislation now allows for a spill-over effect for the accreditation process. By measuring standards, added value can be
demonstrated for consumers and other stakeholders. Penalties can be an important lever in ensuring that higher standards are met.

The licensing guidelines and provisions ratified by the AFDA and implemented by the Victorian Government indicate the minimum acceptable standards for funeral service providers within Victoria. Founded on input from the AFDA Licensing Committee, interviews conducted and exemplars already discussed in Chapter Two, there is rich evidence from the industry about minimum standards. This is consistent with the comments from the AFDA Members Day meeting (see Section 1.6.2.1).

The licensing issue established agreed industry minimum standards that were incorporated in the provisional model, at the lower end of the rating scale. (see Chapter Three) Before firms can be accredited, they first have to be required to meet the licensing requirements.

The expert panel concluded that the four funeral standards presented an accurate representation of the components of funeral service and that all standards were equally important, but at different times in the cycle of a business. Similarly, the panel agreed that the issues arising from the Licensing Committee concerning transfer, storage, infection control and care of the deceased, listed under operations Standard Two, should be mandatory. These licensing provisions would underpin the accreditation model.

A significant view of the expert panel was that all standards should apply equally across the industry regardless of the size of the firm. This was reinforced by the experiences of the health sector and summarised by Respondent Six who stated that, “if different standards applied to smaller firms, it would make the assessment process more difficult and inherently political”.

A pilot program should first be auspiced by the professional association. Roll-out of the model should incorporate schedules for:

- Voluntary phasing in with grandparenting clauses;
- Training and education for industry members;
- A process of auditing by peers;
- Training and selection of industry surveyors;
- Development of an accreditation manual for surveyors; and
- Regular refinement and updating.
Given the impact of the accreditation process on small organisations, based on the experience of the health exemplar in Chapter Two, it was considered that the implementation of the accreditation model should involve a phased, voluntary process. Aspects of the model could be made mandatory over an extended time period which should be a phased process to reflect the gradual acceptance of current funeral firms in Victoria. This was also ratified by the health sector concerning any implementation of and training for an accreditation process.

Issues of complexity and implementation were discussed by several respondents, some of whom agreed with Respondent Two who said, “introduce the accreditation model all at once, but give firms three years to become compliant”. However, Respondents One, Three and Seven considered that the process should be gradually phased in. Respondent Five stated, “that for an accreditation process to be effective, it needs a policing component, with a mechanism for punishment”.

A number of parallels regarding the influence of politics around the implementation of an accreditation model could be drawn across both the funeral and health industries. Based on previous experience in these two industries, there is likely to be resistance to accreditation. Judging by the experience of the health industry, the funeral industry may require a phasing-in process around education and training of industry members, if the model is to be accepted. Interviews revealed that any accreditation model needs to be regularly reviewed by peers to ensure that consistency in approach from surveyors is evident. This process should be regularly evaluated to minimise any variability in practice.

The panel considered that an accreditation model would have a cost impact on all firms and that extensive training and education about the model, including how it would impact on funeral firms, would be essential to any implementation of an accreditation model. This is consistent with the findings of the qualitative stage of the AFDA survey (see Section 1.6.2.1). Health sector findings supported this view. We can conclude, therefore, that for a successful implementation of the accreditation process, the AFDA needs to take a leading role in providing training sessions and manuals explaining the process of accreditation to member firms. This would involve the employment of additional staff over a number of years, leading to higher fees for AFDA members. A detailed explanation of the benefits of the training and additional costs would need to be marketed constantly over the extended implementation period.

The researcher took the provisional theoretical model out to the field through the input of the expert panel. The model was developed and constructed at a higher level, through the
literature review process. Because of this, the expert panel began functioning and understanding the accreditation process at a higher level. The difference between their understanding and that of the four senior industry practitioners was substantial.

The four senior industry practitioners did not have the opportunity to participate in the critique of the model. If given the same opportunities as the expert panel, the researcher believes that they would have responded in a manner similar to their peers. This demonstrates the importance of the educative process and how the model ought to be implemented.

Another key finding was that the accreditation process should be audited by peers who have industry experience. The researcher concluded that skilful surveying was necessary for the implementation process to gain acceptability. There was overwhelming agreement from the expert panel that the model was comprehensive and covered all areas necessary for funeral service providers. This is despite concerns expressed by Respondent Six (see Chapter Two) about the complexity and detail in the model when he said, “there is just too much information for people to get comfortable with and any accreditation model has to be pretty straightforward, or you may get resistance”.

Comments from key members of the health sector indicate that further research into a training program for surveyors and the development of a training manual would be important as the next phase in the development of the accreditation model before it was formally introduced into the funeral industry. Interviews with the health sector as a comparison industry indicate the importance of continuous quality improvement as a feature in the development of an accreditation process for the funeral industry within Victoria.

The professional association should position itself to embrace a leadership role within Australia and internationally, focusing on higher standards and quality performance monitoring.

A country other than Australia could well adopt this draft model, prior to the readiness of the Australian funeral industry to engage in the accreditation process. The reticence of the profession as a whole to move forward to embrace quality performance management is to its disadvantage. It is the view of the researcher that it would be unfortunate if Australia missed the opportunity to implement and take a leadership role in the development of the funeral profession. Early implementation of an accreditation process, possibly in the form of this draft model, would ensure that Australia gains the potential to take a global leadership role.
6.5.3 Research in General

6.5.3.1 Explore Further Evidence of the Link between Theory and Practice

Additional research could be conducted with the expert panel. If the panel members were re-interviewed some years from now, comparisons could be made between how they answered similar questions then compared with those reported in this study. The additional research data generated would provide interesting insights into what changes have occurred in their responses and the reasons for these changes, based on the recent introduction of a licensing regime resulting from the recent Victorian Government Inquiry.

Many of the respondents, whilst acknowledging the comprehensive nature of the model, considered it had too much information and would be too complex to understand and implement for small firms. The six major characteristics of what makes firms organisationally effective were incorporated in a framework that measured standards. This leads to the question, “Is there a more useful and effective framework that can incorporate these concepts in a simpler model?” Further research is required in this area. Trials of accreditation in the real world of funeral practice would be invaluable.

A research strategy similar to the one used in this investigation could be employed in each of the states in Australia to ascertain the value of the accreditation model and its effectiveness as a means of measuring standards. Alternatively, different aspects of organisational effectiveness could be explained from the perspective of the sizes and locations of firms in relation to the measurement and raising of standards within the industry.

The benefits of linking the literature on the factors that make firms organisationally effective with utilising these factors in the construction of the accreditation model were evident from this research project’s findings. The focus on providing quality and value for the customer as the key outcome of the accreditation process was supported by the literature and emphasised by both health sector interviewees and thus further validated the objectives of the research project.

A key finding of these interviews with industry experts, was the insight given by Respondent B from the health sector (see Table 3.1) who was directly responsible for the development of the health sector accreditation model. She stated that the literature on organisational effectiveness was not directly linked to the development of the health sector EQUIP model itself. The researcher has discovered that the health industry sector, which has a thirty-year history and culture of accreditation, did not directly employ the literature about organisational
theory as an underpinning principle in the construction and development of its EQUIP accreditation model. This finding reinforces the significance of the author’s research and its contribution to practice.

This key finding confirms the adoption of the qualitative research strategy chosen. Interviewing the principal architect of the health sector EQUIP accreditation model generated deep and rich data which was absent from the existing literature. As a consequence, the fact that the accreditation model had not been consciously linked to the literature on organisational theory has uncovered the fact that had not been previously highlighted in the public domain.

The model was informed by the funeral industry, i.e., the exemplars and input from experts within the industry. The grounding of the model in the everyday social reality of funeral service represents a bottom-up approach, with this provisional accreditation model incorporating principles of organisational effectiveness. This latter approach represents a top-down strategy missing in the health sector EQUIP accreditation model.

The importance of this research project is that it highlights for the first time the need for a direct link of accreditation to organisational theory. This research highlights the limitations of the existing literature and contributes to original knowledge, through the subsequent analysis of the data generated. Respondent B (see Table 3.1) also considered that further research was required into how accreditation models are evaluated, an area where the researcher has identified that there is a further gap in the literature (see Chapter Two).

### 6.5.3.2 Research Indicators about how Large and Small Firms Adapt to the Challenges of Accreditation

O’Dwyer and Ryan (2000) recognised that small business practices differ from those of large business. Further research that identifies the current practices of small funeral businesses and how they adapt to the challenges of following an accreditation model would be beneficial. This is particularly relevant to small firms where choice is limited and roles highly interchangeable. Although big firms have the largest portion of the funeral industry business, nevertheless, small firms provide an indispensable and valuable service to select areas of the city, where there is not an alternative service to meet their needs. Therefore, in the implementation of any accreditation model, the special needs of small firms should be identified and addressed.
Whilst the researcher has an interest in the role of women in the funeral industry and what makes funeral firms organisationally effective in relation to gender, it was not a focus of this research. Specific issues relating to gender difference in the funeral industry did not emerge from the interviews, perhaps not surprisingly as all the interviewees were male. The changing demographic of the workforce, and of the funeral industry in particular, highlights the need for further research in this area.

Staying profitable remained the most critical issue, as increased competition, with lower margins and increased consumer expectations, is leading to significant challenges for all the respondents’ firms, regardless of size or location. This is particularly relevant for smaller firms. Issues such as the cost and use of technology and traditional areas of funeral service such as training, transfers and vehicles are all being outsourced. A cost focus was supported by Perrott (2004), Pomey et al. (2004), Porter and Teisberg (2004) and Hurst (1997) who remind us that management must not neglect its responsibility for ensuring that the resources spent on quality and performance produce results.

6.5.3.3 Research Areas of Commonality among Human Services Industries to Uncover Potential for Transferability

One importance of the literature review was that it identified the need to involve a range of stakeholders to ensure that the model was focussed on the customer. The researcher was fully aware when constructing and developing the provisional model that it would be unlikely to gain acceptance within the industry for many years. Powerful forces within the industry, whilst privately acknowledging the need for higher standards, were extremely reluctant to embrace change. They view licensing as a means of increasing the barriers of entry to the industry. Their concern was due to the likely higher costs of compliance from clearly defined standards established within an accreditation model. This inherent tension is likely to ensure that the larger firms hinder the process of meaningful standards. Similarly, smaller regional and country firms will be unwilling to confront change or withstand higher compliance charges and are likely to resist change, unless the Government threatens legislative intervention. At this point the industry is likely to come together, but it may be too late then and the industry may be faced with Government intervention and overregulation.
6.6 Conclusion

The research process is one which is fundamentally fluid. The research question and the selection of the research methodology guided the researcher to understand, explore and describe the organisational world as experienced by expert members of the funeral industry in Victoria. By taking an insider view of the organisational world as experienced by the panel of experts, an endeavour was made to discover and understand the mutual knowledge, symbolic meanings and motives of the participants. This research approach elicited informed opinion from the group about standards and how they should be measured within the funeral industry.

The adoption of an accreditation model is critical to organisational effectiveness at a time when many industries are adopting a best practice philosophy and measuring standards as a means of sustaining competitive advantage. This research project makes a significant contribution to the accreditation literature. The investigation identifies the major challenges facing the funeral industry as a whole and thereby the major challenges that confront individual firms.

The results of this investigation confirm that it is possible to develop an instrument with the potential to measure standards for the funeral industry. The main purpose of the research has been addressed. The draft model draws on:

- Theoretical principles of organisational effectiveness;
- Exemplars from funeral industry practices and views of expert practitioners; and
- High quality performance.

The main purpose of this project has been addressed. The time is now right for accreditation.

The Victorian Government has opened the door for quality improvement, through a licensing imperative. If the industry is to self-regulate, a short window of opportunity exists to actively respond to the challenge of accreditation.
Bibliography


Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) – Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee 2007, _National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research_.


Barnard, CI 1938, _The functions of the executive_. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.


Board of Funeral Services, 2001, Annual Report, Toronto, Canada.


Deveson, I 1997, Evolution of an Australian Management Style, Business and Professional Printing, Warriewood NSW.


<www.expresshealthcaremgmt.com.20030115/cover2.shtml>


Fbie, AH 2005 ‘The European Funeral Standard’, *Thanos*, Sept, No. 4-8, pp. 32-37.


Goleman, D 1998, ‘What makes a leader? IQ and technical skills are important, but emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership’, *The Big Picture*, pp. 1-16.


Griffin, GM and Tobin, D 1997, In the midst of life...The Australian Response to Death, (2nd Edition), Melbourne University Press.


Magd, H & Curry A 2003, ‘ISO9000 and TQM: are they complementary or contradictory to each other?’ *The TQM Magazine*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 244-256.


Sink, DS and Tuttle, TC 1989, *Planning and measurement in your organisation of the future*, Industrial Engineering Press, Norcross, GA.


Appendices
Appendix One
The Funeral Industry Accreditation Model – The Provisional Model

After consideration and feedback from the expert panel, the following model was arrived at.

Contents:

- Funeral Industry Standards – Overview
- How the accreditation model was developed
- Standard One - Business Systems – Overview
- Management
- Finance
- Marketing
- Merchandising
- Prepaids
- Standard Two - Operations - Overview
- Transfers
- Mortuary
- Coordination of Funeral Arrangements
- Standard Three - Risk Management - Overview
- Monitor Performance
- Monitor Risks
- Monitor Finances
- Standard Four - Client Management - Overview
- Planning and Leadership
- Human Resources
- Quality
- Information Systems
- Compliance
- Innovation and Change
Table A1.1: Funeral Industry Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 1</th>
<th>Standard 2</th>
<th>Standard 3</th>
<th>Standard 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Systems</td>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Risk Management</td>
<td>Client Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Management</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
<td>Monitor Performance</td>
<td>4.1 The Funeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Structure</td>
<td>Transfers</td>
<td>Establish KPIs</td>
<td>Funeral commencement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Home / Nursing Home / Hospital / Coroner</td>
<td>Approved Business Plan; budget and policies</td>
<td>Family liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Interstate / International</td>
<td>Understand and protect the firm’s financial position</td>
<td>Service participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coffin movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-standard funerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Finance</td>
<td>Mortuary</td>
<td>Monitor Risks</td>
<td>Exhumation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart of accounts</td>
<td>Documentation &amp; ID Procedures</td>
<td>Establish systems to monitor legal and regulatory compliance</td>
<td>Bereavement support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Establish system of internal controls</td>
<td>Client functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial statements</td>
<td>room / ventilation / equipment</td>
<td>Loss of key management due to Health / Death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash management</td>
<td>body preparation</td>
<td>Serious Injury in the Workplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business controls</td>
<td>embalming / dressing / final preparation / encoffining</td>
<td>When big things go wrong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Marketing</td>
<td>infection control</td>
<td>Media Strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>cleaning and work practices</td>
<td>Bankruptcy / Insolvency / Fraud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Co-ordination of Funeral Arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Merchandising</td>
<td>Staff resource allocation</td>
<td>Monitor Finances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Prepaid Funerals</td>
<td>arranging / conducting/funeral assistants</td>
<td>Ensure legal payments complied, i.e., tax, Super, Workcare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>daily running sheets &amp; management reports</td>
<td>Insurances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service delivery</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>education and training</td>
<td>Public liability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>viewings</td>
<td>Professional indemnity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prayer services</td>
<td>Key man insurance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chapel / church / cremation</td>
<td>and succession planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AV requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffin Preparation &amp; Stock Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trim procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>engraving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ID procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ordering, receiving &amp; storage of supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maintenance and procurement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vehicles fleet management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maintenance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This accreditation model was constructed and guided by the review of the literature, which was central to the inquiry concerning the key characteristics that lead to organisational effectiveness. The provisional accreditation model was developed as a framework on how this can be applied to the funeral industry. The following illustrates the process of the literature review.
Figure A1.1: Development of Accreditation Model

The Organisational Literature Theory

- Accreditation
  - Concepts
  - Principles
  - Licensing
- Quality
  - CQI
  - TQI
  - SQM
- Evaluation Frameworks
  - Balanced Score Card
  - Business Excellence Models
- Six characteristics of Organisational Effectiveness
  - Planning & Leadership
  - Human Resources
  - Quality
  - Information Systems
  - Compliance
  - Innovation & Change

Develop Accreditation Model

- Models
  - Literature
- Model Building
  - Literature
- Exemplars of Models
  - Longitudinal perspectives on organisational performance
  - Literature
  - Health Sector EQUIP model
  - Funeral Industry
    - Licensing guidelines
    - AFDA Standards
    - Curriculum AQF
    - Distillation by research of the Industry
    - 4 Funeral Standards

Six characteristics of organisational effectiveness

Four Funeral Standards
- Business Systems
- Operations
- Risk Management
- Client Management

Four Tier Rating Systems
- Awareness
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Best Practice
The literature reveals that issues around quality and how it is measured drive the concept of accreditation. The process of continuous quality improvement (CQI) emerges as the dominant strategy for ensuring accountability and basic quality, together with risk management as fundamentals to the accreditation process.

Evaluation frameworks such as The Balanced Scorecard and business excellence awards were examined to understand how standards and quality criteria can be measured and implemented for funeral organisations. These frameworks were compared and contrasted as a means of developing and implementing a funeral accreditation model. Themes explored include various aspects of quality, such as standards, benchmarking, total quality management (TQM) and strategic quality management (SQM). Based on these theories of organisational effectiveness, an accreditation model was developed incorporating four standards, relating to funeral service provision. The literature demonstrates that organisations today are dynamic, diverse and fluid and any accreditation model must be closely aligned to organisational theory.

Although there are a variety of definitions of accreditation, most of these definitions share common elements. Based on these common elements, accreditation can be defined for this model as:

A continuous voluntary process, whose purpose is to establish agreed industry standards, which aim to improve standards, professionalism and hence quality, through better business practice and customer service. It is a peer-driven performance management system evaluated periodically and audited by peers. It is a process through which organisations proceed in order to be officially recognised.

Accreditation is based on systematic processes with bureaucratic controls, with a focus on performance management. This indicates the need for a structured and formalised, designed set of measurements focusing on continuous improvement. An objective of accreditation is a reduction in variation across standards, and the establishment of professional industry standards that are consistent and credible. A value of an accreditation process is the importance of a writing and documentation culture rather than relying on just organisational memory. Accreditation is a voluntary process, and a strong level of industry support is central to its implementation and long-term success.

From an exploration of the underlying themes of accreditation, quality and evaluation frameworks and the drivers of organisational effectiveness emerged six key characteristics.
The development of this *accreditation* model was based upon six key concepts of organisational success that emerged from the literature:

- Planning and Leadership
- Human Resources
- Quality
- Information Systems
- Compliance
- Innovation and Change

*Each of these characteristics was included as the six major pillars in the construction of the accreditation model. The literature reveals that issues around quality and how it is measured drive the concept of accreditation, with continuous quality improvement emerging as the dominant strategy for ensuring accountability.*

These six key characteristics of success were developed into a working conceptual framework to allow for the application of consistent and measurable standards relevant to the funeral industry in Victoria.

*The literature demonstrates that a multi-paradigm approach is needed to deal with the complexity that organisations face. Hence the accreditation model was constructed integrating each of the six key characteristics that emerged from the literature. A review of the literature addressing accreditation indicated a series of consistent elements:*

- Established explicit standards;
- A peer-driven performance management system;
- A process that ensures and maintains minimum standards of quality;
- A system of evaluating the quality of the service provided;
- Established standards and periodic evaluation; and
- A voluntary process based on audits conducted by peers.

*The construction of this accreditation model incorporated key concepts from evaluation frameworks, such as the Balanced Scorecard, and business excellence awards, which focussed not only on continuous quality improvement but on other non-financial areas, such as the customer, employees and innovation. The insights gained from exploring evaluation*
frameworks and their importance to the construction of the accreditation model was that its measurement methods had been used and tested over a range of diverse industries. This acceptance indicated its importance as a means of measurement of quality and standards, and it also identified key concepts, such as leadership, information systems, continuous improvement, human resources and a customer focus. These specific areas were incorporated in the construction of the model. The literature indicated that measurement was needed over all these areas, not just the financial area, for organisations to become effective.

The literature suggests that quality management leads to an overall improvement of standards, which assists firms to gain a competitive advantage. Quality and a focus on meeting customer needs is a measurable indicator of increased profitability and market share, and was identified as being an indicator critical to success. Quality is a continuous process that needs to be integrated into day-to-day business activities. This systematic approach to setting goals and objectives emerged as central to long-term organisational effectiveness and requires management’s persistent effort. Similarly, culture also has a profound effect on overall organisational success.

Organisational effectiveness is concerned with meeting organisational needs and requirements. Performance management frameworks are vital to success in most organisations and there is a need to holistically integrate systems across the various areas of the business. By utilising his experience as a funeral service practitioner, the writer was able to organise knowledge and incorporate the six key elements into four funeral standards as a means of explaining and organising the different components of funeral service.

In summary, the six key concepts of organisational effectiveness that emerged from the literature and that were incorporated in the construction of the accreditation model were:

- Leadership
- Human resources
- Quality
- Information systems
- Compliance
- Innovation and change

The findings about the six characteristics of organisational effectiveness together with the health sector’s rating system were applied and incorporated in a systematic way to evaluate
and measure standards for the funeral industry. The draft accreditation model was constructed from the literature regarding the current state of knowledge, and utilising these central concepts, a framework model was constructed to enable effectiveness to be measured in a systematic way for funeral service providers in Victoria.

Critical to any model or framework’s successful outcome is how the framework is designed. This accreditation model addresses the six major characteristics of organisational effectiveness in a systematic manner, as it moves from theory (the literature) to practice. There are many issues that were considered in developing and constructing a theoretical framework to apply in a systematic manner the findings of the literature and the interviews. Existing frameworks and current business and theoretical practices were examined, appropriate theories were identified, and a comparison analysis with practice was made.

The construction of the theoretical framework was developed by applying the logic in making sense of the literature about organisational effectiveness, and integrating and rearranging these characteristics into a meaningful funeral accreditation model. Without the construction of such a framework it was virtually impossible to make sense of the existing knowledge in the field in a coherent manner. Any attempt to make sense of a set of observations often use existing concepts and theories. The construction of this theoretical framework discerned the gaps between the existing knowledge and expressed the relevant knowledge in a simple-to-understand format.

Based on the literature a number of theoretical models were examined to apply the six key characteristics of success. To achieve these outcomes four standards were developed under which different components of the funeral industry were identified. Those four standards and sub-groups were as follows:

**Standard One – Business Systems**

- Management
- Finance
- Marketing
- Merchandising
- Prepaid Funerals

**Standard Two – Operations**

- Transfers
- Mortuary
- Coordination of Funeral Arrangements

**Standard Three – Risk Management**
- Monitor Performance
- Monitor Risks
- Monitor Finances

**Standard Four – Client Management**
- The Funeral
- Arrangement
- Documentation

The funeral accreditation model was constructed by organising knowledge in a structured form over four funeral standards. The relationships of each of the four standards to the various parts of the model are explained in the model itself. Senge (1990) supported this approach, stating that to get insights into the real causes of problems, people must learn to see structures rather than events and think in terms of processes rather than static snapshots. Similarly, Khoo and Tan (2003) state that systems thinking enables an understanding of how events are connected to each other.

The model was able to organise the knowledge about funeral service provision into four separate funeral standards. Each of these four funeral standards, titled Business Systems, Operations, Risk Management and Client Management, had sub-categories which incorporated various elements of funeral services, drawn from a combination of factors, such as the literature and a comparison with other industry sectors, specifically the health sector, and its maturation and experience of the accreditation process.

The four funeral standards were adopted from various aspects of the literature. Standard One, Business Systems, incorporates five specific sub-categories: management, finance, marketing, merchandising and prepaid funerals. A key underlying element of this standard is management. The literature supports the specific inclusion of areas such as organisational structure, strategy, human resources, information technology and governance. The four-tier rating system, together with the six characteristics that lead to organisational effectiveness, is applied to each and every one of these areas.
Standard Two, Operations, relates to the delivery of service to the client family. This area covers transfer of the deceased, mortuary practices and the coordination of funeral arrangements. The intent of this standard and its criteria is to ensure that the three key elements of the operational aspects of the Funeral Industry are performed in accordance with public perceptions. Underlying these three components of operations is a strong emphasis upon Planning and Leadership. The leadership group within the organisational structure needs to establish appropriate policies and procedures that will impact effectively on the operations of the company. It is important that operational staff be provided with the appropriate resources, together with the appropriate education and training.

Standard Three, Risk Management, was specifically established as a separate standard based on the findings of Hubbard et al. (2002). The focus of this standard is on what needs to be monitored to be effective. This standard concentrates specifically on monitoring performance, risks and finances. The intent of this standard and its criteria is the implementation of risk management principles, including the development of an organisation-wide risk management policy and risk management systems. This standard links with the Business Systems standard and the importance of being able to manage risk by monitoring performance and finances and the need to comply with legislative requirements.

Standard Four, Client Management, focuses specifically on customer outcomes and incorporates the funeral itself, the arrangement and documentation. The intent of this standard and its criteria is to ensure that the focus is on the delivery of appropriate service levels meeting the needs of client families. Once again, the underlying emphasis is on planning and leadership, where systems and resources are in place to ensure that client families’ funeral service needs are accurately identified and delivered to their expectations.

Each of these four funeral standards comprises the six key characteristics which are then further assessed by a four-tier rating system:

- Awareness
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Best Practice

These four rating systems were developed by borrowing from the health sector industry, where each component of the task is assessed by a qualified industry surveyor who
determines whether the organisation meets the standards that have been developed by the industry.

**Standard One – Business Systems**

This standard incorporates five areas:

1. Management
2. Finance
3. Marketing
4. Merchandising
5. Prepaid Funerals

The intent of this standard and its criteria is that strong leadership and management planning are fundamental to the organisational effectiveness and success of any organisation within the Funeral Industry. Within the management area, there is an emphasis on the role of organisational structure, governance and strategy, as well as the need for strong planning and leadership.

The Human Resources (HR) function ensures that organisations are managed in a manner that supports the provision of quality client services. The criteria ensures that HR is organised appropriately and managed effectively to provide quality, meet the strategic aims of the organisation, support staff and ensure that their safety and well-being are being considered.

The Information Technology focus ensures that effective and efficient management is dependent on timely and accurate information. This area supports organisational performance and funeral service delivery. Organisations need to continuously improve their management of data and information to ascertain whether it is effective and efficient.

The Finance Area covers functions such as the financial statements, cash flow management, budgets and business controls. It ensures that appropriate pricing strategies are identified in relation to market conditions to meet the profit targets of the business. Budget targets are selected to enable ongoing monitoring of financial performance.

Financial risks are identified and protection strategies are initiated in accordance with organisational procedures and policies. The Finance Area ensures that cash flow is accurately
accounted for in accordance with organisation and banking requirements, together with the business plan. Internal financial controls are implemented and reviewed to ensure financial risks are identified and acted upon.

The Marketing area covers functions such as strategy, public relations, advertising, merchandising and pre-paid funerals. It ensures that the development of a business plan provides for finance and the provision of services to facilitate the business goals and objectives. The marketing and promotion strategies identify methods to promote the market exposure of the business in accordance with the business goals and objectives. Ongoing research into new business opportunities allows business goals and objectives to be adjusted as new business opportunities arise. The ability to implement and monitor the marketing strategy and plans optimises the chances of business success.

Management – Planning & Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Strategic planning exists only as an informal process</td>
<td>a. A Strategic Plan exists but it is not linked to the operational plan</td>
<td>a. Strategic and operational plans are integrated and reflect the role of the organisation</td>
<td>a. The process of planning and development is compared with external systems and improvements are made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. There is a planned approach to the development of facilities and services</td>
<td>b. Organisational planning is in accordance with corporate objectives</td>
<td>b. The Board/Senior Management monitors achievement of plans and takes actions to address improvement</td>
<td>b. The organisation demonstrates it is a leader by the success of its services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is limited communication with staff on planned changes</td>
<td>c. Stakeholders, including staff are involved in the development of plans</td>
<td>c. Organisational changes are evaluated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. There is an awareness of the need to develop relationships to achieve organisation and strategic goals</td>
<td>d. Planned changes are clearly communicated to staff</td>
<td>d. Organisational structures and processes are regularly reviewed to ensure quality of service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. An informal organisational structure is in place</td>
<td>e. A formal organisational chart is in place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Management – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Existing delegation procedures throughout the organisation are informal and minimal</td>
<td>a. A system is in place to define delegation and assess compliance</td>
<td>a. Compliance with delegations is monitored and required changes are made</td>
<td>a. Delegations are compared with external systems and improvements are made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Appointments address the structure and the HR needs of the organisation</td>
<td>b. There is a formal process of appointment for management and staff in place</td>
<td>b. The level of delegations is evaluated to ensure it is appropriate for the role of the individual in the organisation and the scope of their responsibilities</td>
<td>b. Systems for monitoring the performance of staff members, is compared with those of other organisations and improvements are made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is an informal orientation/induction of new appointed staff</td>
<td>c. Industrial relations are managed in accordance with legislative requirements</td>
<td>c. The organisation evaluates the performance of staff members and ensures action is taken to address any improvements required</td>
<td>c. The organisation is recognised as a leader in systems of delegating the management of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. There is some basic education of staff regarding their roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>d. There is a consultative and transparent system, that identifies, manages and resolves workplace relations issues</td>
<td>d. Education of staff addresses relevant issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Recruitment processes ensure staff have the necessary licences, registrations, competencies, skills and experience</td>
<td>e. Recruitment processes ensure staff have the necessary licences, registrations, competencies, skills and experience</td>
<td>e. Strategies to motivate staff to continually strive to improve performance are used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Staff have access to information about grievance processes</td>
<td>f. Staff have access to information about grievance processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Management – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Business and operational policies are developed in response to issues as they occur</td>
<td>a. Senior management assesses aspects of its own performance</td>
<td>a. Senior management assess the performance of quality within the organisation</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader for quality within the funeral industry nationally and internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Management is aware of professional guidelines, codes of practice, codes of ethics</td>
<td>b. Staff has access to relevant professional guidelines, codes of practice, codes of ethics at the operational level</td>
<td>b. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and reflected in updated policies and procedures</td>
<td>b. Benchmarking occurs internally and externally and improvements to practices and systems are made across the organisation as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Improving performance needs to be driven by senior management</td>
<td>c. The philosophies, principles and methods relating to quality are used by the organisation</td>
<td>c. Policies reference, current issues, Australian ISO 9000 Standards, professional guidelines, codes of practice, and code of ethics,</td>
<td>c. The organisation is able to demonstrate evidence based practice by organisational policies being reviewed a maximum of every 3 years and by reviewing current literature, i.e., Infection control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Philosophies and principles relating to quality are established</td>
<td>d. Improving performance is a planned and continuous process</td>
<td>d. Data is collected and analysed and used to drive improvement</td>
<td>d. The organisation’s continuous quality improvement system demonstrates it is a leader in commitment to service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. A complaints mechanism is in place</td>
<td>e. Management identifies and promotes the organisation’s performance targets</td>
<td>e. Results from performance targets and improving performance activities are communicated widely within the organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Management allocates resources to improving staff performance</td>
<td>f. Continuous improvement activities are generated and evaluated by staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. A complaints mechanism for staff is implemented</td>
<td>g. Complaints are analysed and improvements are made to systems, services and facilities as required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. There is a mechanism for communicating feedback about service delivery to staff and management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Management – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff</td>
<td>a. Staff and</td>
<td>a. Performance</td>
<td>a. Initiatives to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
are instructed in and understand their responsibilities for documentation.

1. There is a records management system that ensures:
   a. Storage areas or systems meet the organisations retention requirements, or alternative arrangements are implemented.
   b. Data required by legislation and or industry guidelines are monitored for compliance and are validated.
   c. Information is available for decision making.
   d. IT needs current and future are identified, budgets allocated and acquisitions planned using an IT strategy.
   e. Relevant hardware and software are linked to provide accurate and efficient data.
   f. The organisation is identified as a leader in its ability to use information.

2. Data management is evaluated to ensure:
   a. Data integrity is not compromised.
   b. There is timely and accurate retrieval of data.
   c. Duplication is minimised.
   d. Reports meet user needs.
   e. Changes or improvements reflect service requirements.

3. IT systems are evaluated and improved to ensure:
   a. Information is consistently presented.
   b. In a useful way to those who need it.
   c. Report time frames are consistently met.
   d. The organisation is identified as a leader in its ability to use information.

4. IT strategies and information use are compared externally with organisations to identify and implement any improvements necessary.

5. Systems for the management of information are compared internally and externally and improvements made as required.

6. Analysis and report systems are implemented as required to ensure:
   a. Information is consistently presented.
   b. In a useful way to those who need it.
   c. Report time frames are consistently met.

7. The organisation is identified as a leader in its ability to use information.

8. IT strategies and information use are compared externally with organisations to identify and implement any improvements necessary.

9. Indicators are used to evaluate record management systems and improvements are made as required.

10. The organisation is identified as a leader in its ability to use information.

11. IT strategies and information use are compared externally with organisations to identify and implement any improvements necessary.
### Management – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Management is aware of legislative requirements</td>
<td>a. A system is in place for assessing compliance with legislative requirements</td>
<td>a. The system for ensuring implementation of and compliance with legislative requirements is evaluated and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>a. The system to address legislative requirements is compared with external systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Management is accountable for the implementation of and compliance with legislative requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its systems to address legislative requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. A mechanism / system is in place to receive notification of any changes or new legislative requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Management – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. There is a limited communication with staff on planned changes</td>
<td>a. Planned changes are clearly communicated to staff</td>
<td>a. Organisation changes are evaluated</td>
<td>a. The organisation demonstrates it is a leader by the success of its services and proactive response to internal and external challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. An organisation-wide culture demonstrates management is committed to and responsible for improving performance and service delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Finance – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Budgeting, reporting and auditing processes, consistent with legislative and accepted requirements are in place</td>
<td>a. Financial systems, including asset management have been implemented</td>
<td>a. Monitoring systems on financial performance are in place and communicated to relevant staff</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its credible and transparent accounting policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Financial records are maintained correctly in accordance with organisational requirements and legal and accounting practices</td>
<td>b. Cash flow is accurately accounted for in accordance with organisational requirements and business plan</td>
<td>b. Working capital requirements to obtain profit projections are monitored</td>
<td>b. Financial performance targets are regularly monitored and reported to senior management to establish the extent to which the financial plan has been met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Appropriate pricing strategies are identified in relation to market conditions to meet the profit targets of the business</td>
<td>c. Payments are made and received in accordance with organisational requirements</td>
<td>c. Capital investment requirements are identified and monitored for each operational period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Financial information requirements are identified and specialist services obtained as required, to profitably operate and extend the business in accordance with the business plan</td>
<td>d. Outstanding accounts are collected and followed up within designated timelines</td>
<td>d. Budget objectives are clear and consistent with organisational aims</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Profit projections are prepared to implement the business plan and to reflect owners desired returns</td>
<td>e. Profit projections are prepared to implement the business plan and to reflect owners desired returns</td>
<td>e. Trends, issues and comparisons are identified in a structured format to ensure validity of analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. That relevant data for forecasts are identified and changes in circumstances are anticipated</td>
<td>f. That relevant data for forecasts are identified and changes in circumstances are anticipated</td>
<td>f. Debt to equity targets are analysed in terms of the organisation’s expected performance and established in line with the organisation’s financial objectives using standard accounting techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. A developed system for financing and repayment schedules is in place</td>
<td>g. A developed system for financing and repayment schedules is in place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. An auditor / accountant is appointed</td>
<td>h. An auditor / accountant is appointed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Finance – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge of computer literacy, keyboarding skills, finance/bookkeeping and accounting guidelines</td>
<td>a. Financial procedures are recorded and communicated to the relevant people to facilitate the implementation of the business plan</td>
<td>a. Monitoring systems on financial performance are in place and communicated to relevant staff</td>
<td>a. Staff’s financial and accounting practices and skills are compared internally and externally with other organisations and improvements are made as required, i.e., skill tests at appropriate intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge of organisational policies and procedures relating to maintaining financial records</td>
<td>b. Communication skills to clarify information and refer errors or discrepancies to appropriate people</td>
<td>b. Financial and performance indicators are used to improve systems and ensure staff skills are regularly updated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Literacy skills to identify financial information, and be able to read and understand the organisation’s accounting procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Financial and accounting practices are regularly reviewed and updated to comply with legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. An ability to read and interpret financial data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. That staff have the relevant financial skills to perform their jobs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Best Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. An ability to read and interpret financial statements and reports</td>
<td>a. Key performance indicators are selected to enable ongoing monitoring of financial performance</td>
<td>a. Financial ratios are calculated and evaluated according to firm/industry benchmarks</td>
<td>a. The organisation is seen as a leader in financial systems and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. An understanding of organisational structures and financial lines of management authority</td>
<td>b. Discrepancies or errors in documentation or transactions are identified and rectified</td>
<td>b. Benchmarking of financial information with internal and external systems are introduced and improvements made as necessary</td>
<td>b. Financial systems are compared externally and improvements made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Payment documentation is checked for accuracy of information and dispatched to creditors within designated timelines</td>
<td>c. Appropriate action is taken to ensure the achievement of profit and return to enable business operation in accordance with the business plan and legal requirements</td>
<td>c. Milestones and KPI are identified and included in budgets to monitor financial performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Security procedures are put in place</td>
<td>d. Client credit policies including contingencies for debtors in default are developed, monitored and maintained to maximise cash flow</td>
<td>d. Reports are prepared with a detailed and clear audit trail to ensure comprehensive financial monitoring may be carried out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Understanding of the importance of a general ledger chart of accounts in relation to maintaining and reporting of financial data</td>
<td>e. Strategies to enable adequate financial provision for taxation and capital expenditure is developed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Literacy skills to interpret and evaluate the purposes and uses of various features of spreadsheets;</td>
<td>f. Regular internal audits are held and results discussed with relevant staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Finance – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Literacy and numeracy skills to read and interpret financial information</td>
<td>a. Transferring and recording financial data accurately</td>
<td>a. Financial information records are identified to meet the needs of the business in accordance with legal requirements</td>
<td>a. The Company’s finance system is compared with external systems and other industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge and application of advanced spreadsheet features</td>
<td>b. Successful operation of linked spreadsheets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Knowledge of impact of formatting and design on the presentation and readability of data</td>
<td>c. Financial budgets/projectio ns, including cash flow estimates, are produced as required for each forward year/period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Data is presented in a format that is easily understood and appropriate for budget reporting</td>
<td>d. Reports are prepared in an accurate, timely and thorough manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Finance – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge of the relevant legislation from all levels of Government that affects business operations, especially in regard to OHS, equal opportunity, industrial relations, wages and tax rates, anti-discrimination</td>
<td>a. Relevant accounting procedures maintained according to legal requirements</td>
<td>a. Statutory rules are regularly and comprehensively reviewed to ensure all requirements for reporting are planned for and met in the required manner</td>
<td>a. The system needed to address compliance requirements is compared with external systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge of financial legislation references and information</td>
<td>b. Administration and Financial record keeping procedures are developed and documented in accordance with legal requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Basic knowledge of specific tax requirements relevant to the industry</td>
<td>c. Taxation records are maintained and reporting requirements met</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Legal obligations for record keeping</td>
<td>d. All reports comply fully with auditor requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. All required sign-offs are obtained from responsible parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Finance – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A culture exists of the need for continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to company financial systems and recommendation for improvements are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. Regular review of policies and practices by management with emphasis on a blame free culture</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader, and its policies and procedures are compared with external systems, and improvements are made across the organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Marketing – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Business opportunities are investigated and identified</td>
<td>a. An action plan is developed to provide a clear and coherent direction in accordance with the business goals and objectives</td>
<td>a. Marketing strategies are monitored for their effects on the financial plan</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its innovative marketing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Marketing and promotion strategies identify methods to promote the market exposure of the business</td>
<td>b. Systems and KPIs are implemented to monitor business performance and customer satisfaction</td>
<td>b. The achievement of operational targets is regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure optimum business performance in accordance with the goals and objectives of the business plan</td>
<td>b. The organisation marketing plan is regularly monitored to establish the extent to which the financial plan has been met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Ability to be able to set goals and objectives</td>
<td>c. Marketing and promotional activities are determined to suit each target market</td>
<td>c. Business plan is reviewed and adjusted as required to maintain business viability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Knowledge of types of business planning such as feasibility studies, strategic, operational and financial planning</td>
<td>d. Ability to develop a marketing strategy and choice of marketing mix to complement the business plan and optimise the chances of business success</td>
<td>d. Knowledge of methods of analysing costs and benefits of marketing strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Research new business opportunities</td>
<td>e. There is a knowledge of the methods of analysing costs and benefits of marketing strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Knowledge of industry market trends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Marketing – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staffing requirements are identified as required to effectively deliver services</td>
<td>a. Staffing requirements where applicable, are maintained within budget to maximise productivity</td>
<td>a. The organisation evaluated the performance of its staff and ensures action is taken to address any improvements required</td>
<td>a. Systems for monitoring the performance of the marketing staff is compared with those of other organisations and improvements are made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge of relevant marketing concepts and methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Knowledge of relevant market analysis and research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Knowledge of the workplace business plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Problem solving skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Planning and organisation skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Ability to work in a team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Marketing – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Risk management strategies are identified and developed according to business goals and objectives and relevant legal requirements</td>
<td>a. The provision of services meets time, cost and quality specifications in accordance with customer requirements</td>
<td>a. Performance measures, operational targets and quality assurance issues are developed to conform with the business plan</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader of marketing quality within the Funeral Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. There is a knowledge of the principles of risk management relevant to business planning</td>
<td>b. Quality procedures are applied to address service and customer requirements</td>
<td>b. Effectiveness issues are analysed and corrective action is taken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The provision of services is carried out in accordance with established technical, legal and ethical standards</td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Customer reaction to all aspects of marketing and promotional activities is sought and analysed to improve targeting and outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Marketing – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are instructed in, and understand their responsibilities for the various systems used within the organisation for marketing purposes</td>
<td>a. Strategies for using, new or emerging technologies are developed and implemented where practicable to optimise business performance</td>
<td>a. Impacts of emerging or changing technology including e-commerce, on business operations are evaluated</td>
<td>a. Systems for the management of marketing information are compared internally and externally, and improvements made as required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Marketing – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Legislation and regulations</td>
<td>a. The business plan demonstrates research into</td>
<td>a. The system for ensuring implementation of and compliance with legislative</td>
<td>c. The system to address legislative requirements is compared with external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevant to the business</td>
<td>customer needs, resources and legal requirements</td>
<td>requirements is evaluated and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>systems to address legislative requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities are identified</td>
<td>especially OHS, in accordance with business goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge of relevant industry</td>
<td>and objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>code of practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Marketing – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The culture exists for the need</td>
<td>a. The utilisation of existing, new or emerging</td>
<td>a. Systems and structures are reviewed, with a view to more effectively</td>
<td>a. The organisation demonstrates it is a leader, by its proactive response to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for continuous improvement</td>
<td>technologies, is developed to respond to changing</td>
<td>implementing business performance</td>
<td>internal and external challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>customer needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. The organisation is recognised as a leader, and its policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Strategies are developed for the use of networks</td>
<td></td>
<td>are compared with external systems and improvements are made across the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to assist in promoting the business and for</td>
<td></td>
<td>organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>monitoring changing business requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. All staff members are encouraged to propose ways</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to improve marketing performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Merchandising – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A knowledge of pricing and merchandising</td>
<td>a. The organisation’s overall marketing strategy and specific marketing plans are communicated to team members</td>
<td>a. Effective implementation and monitoring of marketing strategy and marketing plans</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader, by the success of its merchandising levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. A knowledge and understanding of supplier relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Facilities/space in building set aside for coffin/casket displays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. photographic images completed to high standard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Merchandising – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge of display construction, pricing procedures and visual merchandising principles</td>
<td>a. Staff are trained to participate effectively in the implementation of relevant aspects of the marketing strategy and marketing plans</td>
<td>a. Sales figures and staff training is regularly monitored</td>
<td>a. Systems for benchmarking the performance of staff members in relation to merchandising are compared with those of other organisation s and improvements are made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge of stock control and display maintenance principles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Knowledge of workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Personal integrity, ethics, accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Merchandising – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are instructed in, and understand their responsibilities for documentation and attention to detail</td>
<td>a. Accurate recording and appropriate reporting of merchandising results</td>
<td>a. Software program highlights sales by person and product</td>
<td>a. Initiatives to improve documentation and data management systems are internally and externally compared and improvements made as required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Merchandising – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Visually attractive photo albums are provided</td>
<td>a. Construction of displays is planned to achieve balance and visual impact to ensure they accurately depict the product or service being promoted in accordance with consumer law</td>
<td>a. Display presentation standards are assessed and evaluated</td>
<td>a. The organisation monitors the performance of staff members, and their sales levels are compared with those of other organisations, and improvements are made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Well planned and lit coffin display rooms</td>
<td>b. Replenishment of merchandise and rotation of stock on display is regularly monitored</td>
<td>b. Sales figures and staff training is regularly monitored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Merchandising – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge of consumer law and relevant state / territory trade practices acts</td>
<td>a. Consistent application of safe work practices for the manual handling and moving of products, according to OHS legislation / regulation</td>
<td>a. A system for ensuring implementation of and compliance with legislative requirements is evaluated and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its systems to address legislative requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Merchandising – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A culture exists of the need for continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to company merchandising systems and recommendations for improvement are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. Display presentation standards are assessed and evaluated</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader and its policies and procedures are compared with external systems, and improvements are made across the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Suggestions to improve marketing activities or results are provided as appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Prepaid Funerals – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Opportunities to provide clients with information about the range of products and services available are identified and used</td>
<td>a. Procedures are followed and adhered to by a systems based approach and reporting to senior management</td>
<td>a. The systems and practices are evaluated regularly and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader, by the success of its prepaid sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Accurate identification of a range of clients’ needs using appropriate communication and integrated skills and matching of those needs to appropriate products or services using empathy, sensitivity and ethical behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. The organisation’s prepaid sales is compared with external benchmarks and improvements are made as required by senior management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prepaid Funerals – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Client questions about products or services are answered accurately and honestly</td>
<td>a. There is an education/trainings process to ensure that families' enquiries and requests are responded to with appropriate empathy and sensitivity</td>
<td>a. Sales figures and staff training is regularly monitored by senior management</td>
<td>a. Systems for benchmarking the performance of staff members in relation to prepaid sales is compared with those of other organisations, and improvements are made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. There is a knowledge of the range of benefits and features of funeral products and services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Knowledge of sales principles and business ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Ability to use sales principles appropriately and sensitively in the context of bereavement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. A range of communication and inter-personal skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prepaid Funerals – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are instructed in and understand their responsibilities for documentation and attention to detail</td>
<td>a. Systems are developed to ensure documentation is checked and correct</td>
<td>a. Documents and software system is evaluated and necessary improvements are made and communicated to staff</td>
<td>a. Initiatives to improve documentation and data management systems are internally and externally compared and improvements made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. There is accurate recording and appropriate reporting of prepaid sales results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Prepaid Funerals – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are aware of documentation procedures, and the need for accuracy</td>
<td>a. Knowledge of features of products or services is communicated clearly to clients</td>
<td>a. Policies and procedures are regularly monitored by senior management</td>
<td>a. Senior management monitors the performance of staff members and their sales levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Options and suggestions for personalising available products and services are offered based on assessment of client needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Prepaid Funerals – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge and understanding of relevant Federal, State and Local Government legislation and requirements</td>
<td>a. Where required accurate information on financing arrangements is provided to match the client’s financial situation according to relevant legislative and regulatory requirements and workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td>a. A system for ensuring implementation of and compliance with legislative requirements and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its systems to address legislative requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prepaid Funerals – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A culture exists of the need for continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to the company prepaid systems and recommendations for improvement are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. The organisation’s strategy and plans are regularly monitored</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader in prepaid sales and its policies and procedures are compared with external systems, and improvements are made across the organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard Two – Operations

This standard incorporates three areas:

1. Transfers
2. Mortuary
3. Coordination of funeral arrangements

The intent of this standard and its criteria is to ensure that the three key elements of the operational aspects of the funeral industry are performed in accordance with public perceptions. Underlying these three components of operations is a strong emphasis upon Planning and Leadership. The leadership group within the organisational structure needs to establish appropriate policies and procedures that will impact effectively on the operations of the company. It is important that operational staff be provided with the appropriate resources, together with the appropriate education and training.

The Human Resources function ensures that the organisation’s HR is managed in a manner that supports the provision of quality client services. The criteria ensure that the HR are organised appropriately and managed effectively to provide quality, meet the strategic aims of the organisation, support staff and ensure that their safety and well-being are being considered.

An Information Technology focus ensures that effective and efficient management is dependent on timely and accurate information. This helps support organisational performance
and funeral service delivery. Organisations need to continuously improve their management of data and information to ascertain whether it is effective and efficient.

Compliance is another strong component of operations, particularly from a risk management perspective, and underpins particularly issues around infection control practices as well as OHS and manual handling techniques. An innovation and change focus ensures that the organisation is constantly reviewing the way it does things with a focus on continuous improvement across the organisation.

### Transfers – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Management is accountable for the implementation and compliance with legislative requirements</td>
<td>a. A system is in place for assessing compliance with legislative requirements</td>
<td>a. The system for ensuring implementation of and compliance with transfer requirements is evaluated and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>a. The system to address transfers is compared with external systems and improvements are made as required by senior management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Provision of appropriate resources</td>
<td>b. Correct preparation and presentation of transfer vehicle and equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Knowledge of workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td>c. Supportive team work is to be sustained at all times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Transfers – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are aware of accurate completion, checking and verification of documentation and requirements</td>
<td>a. Consistent demonstration of safe lifting and manual handling techniques to move and transfer a deceased person</td>
<td>a. Policies and procedures are regularly evaluated and necessary improvements are made by senior management</td>
<td>a. Benchmark against the Ambulance and Hospital sectors' selection and training procedures for the appointment of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge of workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td>b. Use of sensitive and empathetic verbal and non-verbal communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Ability and legal entitlement to drive</td>
<td>c. Family/person in charge is informed of the overall transfer process throughout and their verbal or written agreement or permission is sought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Verbal and non-verbal communication skills</td>
<td>d. Successful registration of arrangements and requirements with the consignee interstate or international funeral director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. In event of death occurring in suspicious circumstance, death is reported to Coroner by the treating doctor or funeral staff if necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Transfers – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a. All relevant paperwork and resources are available for staff, including first call data and ID procedures systems | a. Correct labelling of the deceased person  
   b. Accurate recording and registering of the personal effects and valuables of the deceased person | a. System is evaluated and necessary improvements made                                               | a. The company’s procedures and policies are compared with external systems                       |

## Transfers – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a. Ability to relate to people from a range of social, cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds and physical and mental abilities | a. Adherence to professional dress standards  
   b. Health and Safety procedures are thoroughly applied  
   c. The deceased person is conveyed in a level position whenever and wherever practicable  
   d. Client confidentiality is always maintained  
   e. Ethical behaviour to be practised at all times | a. Customer feedback and complaints are promptly recognised and responded to in a timely manner | a. The company’s practices and policies are compared with external systems and any improvements are made by senior management as required |
| b. Customer service skills including the ability to respect and maintain confidentiality |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                   |
| c. The deceased person is treated with respect                            |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                   |
| d. Accurate and legible recording of interstate or international repatriation details |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                   |
**Transfers – Compliance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge and understanding of relevant Federal, State and Local Government legislation and requirements&lt;br&gt;b. Knowledge of manual handling techniques, first aid, OHS and infection control practices&lt;br&gt;c. Awareness of legislative requirements regarding interstate and international repatriation</td>
<td>a. Adherence to infection control practices&lt;br&gt;b. The relevant protective equipment is provided and used according to workplace policies and procedures&lt;br&gt;c. Vehicle and equipment meets Industry standards</td>
<td>a. Systems for ensuring implementation of and compliance with legislative requirements is regularly evaluated every 3 years and improvements made by senior management as required</td>
<td>a. The systems used to address compliance requirements are compared with external systems&lt;br&gt;b. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its systems to address compliance requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transfers – Innovation & Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. An organisational culture exists that fosters continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. New lifting techniques and equipment are monitored&lt;br&gt;b. Suggestions to company systems and recommendation s for improvements are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. Regular review of forms and systems by management</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader and its policies and procedures are compared with external systems and improvements are made across the organisation as required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Mortuary – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Management is accountable that systems are in place to ensure all relevant documents get to coordination, and that all documentation should be checked by at least one other staff person</td>
<td>a. A system is in place for assessing that the property of the deceased person is registered</td>
<td>a. The system for ensuring correct identification and property details is evaluated and necessary improvements are made as required by senior management at 3-yearly intervals</td>
<td>a. That benchmarks are made against 1. Hospital/Medical Infection Control procedures 2. Mortuary Colleges overseas 3. Australian Institute of Embalmers Code of Practice 4. The Industry Code of Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Confidentiality, privacy and dignity is maintained at all times</td>
<td>b. That all OHS, manual handling and other legislation requirements are followed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mortuary – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are aware of Infection Control, OHS and manual handling techniques</td>
<td>a. Ability to monitor the above and identify and address any breaches in the application of workplace policies and procedures and assist staff in addressing any other problems encountered</td>
<td>a. Policies and procedures are regularly evaluated every 3 years and necessary improvements are made by senior management</td>
<td>a. Organisation is benchmarked against other firms within Australia and overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. That there is a knowledge and understanding of and respect for social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. A workplace injury register is monitored and checked</td>
<td>b. Continuous education programmes and events are regularly attended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. That there is a knowledge of workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Ability to recognise professional parameters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Mortuary – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Understanding of the existence and importance of following documented processes</td>
<td>a. Accurate identification of mortuary procedures and body preparation procedures and demonstrated ability to clearly communicate this knowledge to staff</td>
<td>a. Documentation is evaluated and necessary improvements made and communicated to staff</td>
<td>a. The organisation benchmarks against other financial firms within Australia and overseas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Mortuary – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Infection control standards and procedures are strictly maintained at all times</td>
<td>a. Body preparation procedures are monitored regularly to ensure they are completed correctly, safely and in accordance with correct procedures</td>
<td>a. Any problems arising during or after mortuary procedures or body preparation procedures are addressed by senior management</td>
<td>a. The organisation is benchmarked against Mortuary Colleges, external firms and hospital organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Cleanliness and tidiness of the mortuary is maintained. Suggestions and recommendations for improvements are actively encouraged</td>
<td>b. Potential and actual breaches of OHS or infection control procedures are identified and appropriate action taken where necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Regular inspections of all equipment are carried out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Correct maintenance and servicing of mortuary equipment to minimise unavailability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Social, religious, cultural differences relating to handling, body preparation and embalming of deceased persons is acknowledged through education and policy manuals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Mortuary – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Personal protective equipment is worn in accordance with workplace policies and procedures, OHS procedures and infection control practices</td>
<td>a. Effective implementation of mortuary security procedures to maintain privacy of mortuary</td>
<td>a. The above systems are evaluated and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>a. The organisation is benchmarked against other firms within Australia and overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. All applicable legislation and regulations are adhered to – Infection control system</td>
<td>b. Accurate maintenance of mortuary equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. A knowledge of the various procedures and workplace practices and applicable legislative and regulations</td>
<td>c. Provide and maintain a sterile environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Dangerous goods and hazardous substances are identified and stored appropriately</td>
<td>d. Monitoring of mortuary cleaning procedures and practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Personal protective equipment is worn when required</td>
<td>e. Monitor consistent adherence to infection control practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Signs for dangerous goods and hazardous substances are identified and followed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g. Legislative requirements for hazardous substances, dangerous goods and dangerous substances are known and used to plan work activities and followed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. Accident reporting processes are identified and put into place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Mortuary – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A culture exists of the need for continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to company systems and recommendation for improvements are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. There are 3 yearly regular reviews of forms and practices by senior management</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader and its policies and procedures are compared with external systems and improvements are made across the organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Coordination of Funeral Arrangements – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Resourcing requirements are identified for individual funeral operations and funeral schedules are developed</td>
<td>a. Funeral requests and requirements are identified through liaison with funeral staff and checking of relevant documentation</td>
<td>a. All systems are regularly evaluated every 3 years and any necessary changes are made as required</td>
<td>a. The organisation benchmarks against industry and external providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Problem solving and negotiation skills are used to address any scheduling difficulties that may arise</td>
<td>b. Availability of resources are identified by checking schedules and consulting with relevant personnel</td>
<td>b. Workload of staff is continuously assessed in accordance with agreed objectives and timelines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is an awareness of appropriate allocation of tasks in accordance with staff expertise</td>
<td>c. Funeral arrangement staff are consulted regarding funeral schedules in accordance with workplace procedures</td>
<td>c. Feedback on individual/teams performance is provided in a constructive manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Successful coordination of staff schedules and rosters and resolution of associated problems and difficulties</td>
<td>d. Vehicles and equipment are scheduled for use in accordance with funeral requirements, availability and logistical practicalities</td>
<td>d. Implementation and management of effective rostering and staffing levels which meet workplace needs, budgeting requirements, and safe working requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. The security of staff records is maintained according to workplace policies and applicable legislation and regulations</td>
<td>e. Effective coordination and management of staff and resources demonstrating leadership and decision making skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Equal opportunities for employee professional development are identified and provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Coordination of Funeral Arrangements – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are aware of the need for attention to detail</td>
<td>a. Staff are scheduled and rostered in accordance with funeral schedules, staff availability and logistical practicalities</td>
<td>a. Policies and procedures are regularly evaluated and necessary improvements are made</td>
<td>a. The organisation benchmarks against selection process systems from within Industry locally, nationally and overseas and other service industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Demonstrate flexibility, lateral thinking and creative initiative</td>
<td>b. Staff members are informed of rosters and schedules in accordance with workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td>b. Equal opportunities for employee professional development are identified and provided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Staff are liaised with to identify operational resource requirements</td>
<td>c. Feedback on individuals and teams performance is provided in a constructive manner by senior management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Contingency plans are developed to allow for unforeseen staffing issues and implemented effectively as required</td>
<td>d. Successful coordination of the completion of tasks within designated time-frames</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Systems are implemented that allocate staff resources to provide a meaningful funeral service for clients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Staff records are created and maintained in accordance with workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Coordination of Funeral Arrangements – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are aware of information and systems that are required to ensure Operations Managers can provide resources for their funeral arrangements</td>
<td>a. Systems and protocols are followed by all staff</td>
<td>a. Systems are evaluated against complaints and evaluation feedback and appropriate recommendations adopted by senior management</td>
<td>a. The organisation benchmarks against other firms of similar size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Coordination of Funeral Arrangements – Information Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Awareness of need to accurately interpret written documentation and instruction systems that develops and coordinates funeral operation schedules</td>
<td>a. Demonstrate that systems used are accurate and as error free as possible. Technology is applied for internal and external communication purposes</td>
<td>a. Documented systems are regularly evaluated and necessary improvements made and communicated to staff</td>
<td>a. The organisation benchmarks against other funeral firms and other external service firms such as ambulance or government service industries to compare and contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Need to act as a central repository for gathering and dispensing of information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Incoming goods are accurately checked and validated against purchase orders and delivery documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Coordination of Funeral Arrangements – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation and regulations and how it relates to the timing and scheduling of funeral services</td>
<td>a. Systems and procedures are followed and adhered to</td>
<td>a. The systems and practices are evaluated every three years and necessary improvements are made as required</td>
<td>a. The organisation benchmarks against other firms locally, nationally and overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Knowledge of inventory control systems</td>
<td>b. Stock levels are accurately recorded according to workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Consistent application of safe work practices for the manual handling and moving of stock, according to OHS legislation/regulations / codes of practice</td>
<td>c. A system is in place for assessing compliance with legislative requirements and to ensure all workplace policies and procedures are met</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Secure storage of goods arranged according to workplace policies and procedures and Government legislation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coordination of Funeral Arrangements – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Awareness of needs to be flexible and change practices if necessary</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to systems and recommendations for improvements are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. Regular review of systems and practices by operations manager</td>
<td>a. The organisation benchmarks locally, nationally and internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Availability to improvise and problem solve in varying situations</td>
<td>b. Any new innovations or changes are discussed with staff for follow-up and action by senior management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard Three – Risk Management

This standard incorporates three areas which monitor:

- Performance
- Risks
- Finances

The intent of this standard and its criteria is the implementation of risk management principles including the development of an organisation-wide risk management policy and risk management systems. This standard links with the Business Systems Standard and the importance of being able to manage risk by monitoring performance and finances and the need to comply with legislative requirements.

Systems and key performance indicators (KPIs) are implemented and reviewed to monitor business, performance and customer satisfaction to ensure that the organisation continually assesses its performance in meeting its strategic objectives.

The human resources function ensures that management has allocated resources to risk management and that it is understood and maintained by all levels of the organisation. The information systems are evaluated regularly and a strategy for disaster recovery is incorporated. Compliance is revised regularly in line with regulatory changes and relevant standards.
The importance of managing risk is crucial to the survival of business and the need to be aware of changes in the operating environment and the impact these risks can have on the business needs to be regularly reviewed by management. The financial plan identifies sources and costs of finance to provide required liquidity and profitability for the business.

Crisis Management strategies that identify responses to critical issues that can impact on financial viability such as insolvency, fraud and bankruptcy are identified, as well as sudden or serious injuries to key senior staff.

A Media Strategy for dealing when things go wrong is also addressed.

**Risk Management – Planning and Leadership – Monitor Performance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. An informal organisational structure is in place</td>
<td>a. A formal organisational structure is in place</td>
<td>a. Senior management assesses the overall performance of the organisation in meeting its strategic objectives at least yearly and assesses its own performance</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its transparent governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. A formal process of appointment for senior management is in place</td>
<td>b. A risk management policy is endorsed by management and sufficient resources are allocated</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. The organisation is recognised as a leader in risk management and commendations are received from third parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is an informal orientation of newly appointed senior management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Legislative requirements relevant to risk management are met</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. There is an understanding of the need for an organisation-wide risk management policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Risk Management – Human Resources – Monitor Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. There is an awareness of the need to manage risks throughout the organisation</td>
<td>a. A risk management policy is defined and implemented</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is reflective of current standards</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is compared externally with other risk management policies to identify aspects that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Legislative requirements relevant to risk management are met</td>
<td>b. The risk management policy is relevant to the organisation’s strategic plan, goals, objectives and the nature of the business</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. The organisation demonstrates that it is a leader in its approach to risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is an organisational risk management policy</td>
<td>c. The risk management policy is endorsed by senior management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Staff are aware of the risk management policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Awareness
- Operational policies are developed in response to issues as they occur.
- The risk management policy includes strategies for managing incidents and adverse events.
- There is a comprehensive incident reporting mechanism in place.
- There is an awareness of the need for consultation and communication about managing risks across the organisation.
- A blame free culture exists across the organisation.

### Implementation
- There is an adherence to operating and management requirements.
- Staff are aware, at the operational level, of Industry guidelines, Codes of Practice and Codes of Ethics.
- There is a system for monitoring compliance with policies and procedures.
- An integrated blame free system which identifies, reports and manages failures is in place.

### Evaluation
- Operating and senior management requirements are regularly reviewed every 3 years to reflect current requirements.
- The risk management policy is reviewed at least yearly in line with regulatory changes and relevant standards.
- A blame free culture of enquiry and learning exists which reviews organisational systems rather than people.

### Best Practice
- The risk management policy is compared externally with other risk management policies to identify aspects that can be improved.
- Performance indicators for risk management are analysed and compared with similar internal and external systems and changes in processes are made, as required by senior management.
## Risk Management – Information Systems – Monitor Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The need for a disaster recovery system is understood</td>
<td>a. Backup data is stored off-site</td>
<td>a. A preventative maintenance system for IT is evaluated regularly and improved as required</td>
<td>a. Security systems and data recovery systems are compared externally and improvements made, as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. A strategy for disaster recovery is in place and includes a prioritisation schedule</td>
<td>b. Performance indicators are used to eliminate and/or control risks to the IT system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. There is a planned system for preventative maintenance for IT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Security and virus detection backups are in place and used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Risk Management – Compliance – Monitor Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. There is a knowledge of all the relevant Federal, State and local Government legislation and requirements</td>
<td>a. Systems and procedures are followed and adhered to</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is revised yearly in line with regulatory changes and relevant standards</td>
<td>a. The systems used to address compliance requirements are compared with external systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Risk Management – Innovation and Change – Monitor Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A culture exists and is fostered of continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to company systems and recommendations for improvements are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. There are regular review of policies and procedures by senior management and staff</td>
<td>b. The organisation is recognised as a leader, and its policies and procedures are compared with external systems, and improvements are made across the organisation by senior management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Risk Management – Planning and Leadership – Monitor Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. An informal organisational structure is in place</td>
<td>a. A risk management policy is defined and implemented</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is reflective of current standards</td>
<td>a. Transparent governance together with components of the operational framework, are compared with external systems to identify processes that may be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Legislative requirements relevant to risk management are met</td>
<td>b. The risk management policy is relevant to the organisation’s strategic goals and objectives and the nature of the business</td>
<td>b. There is a system for senior management to evaluate if the risk management policy is understood, implemented and maintained by all levels of the organisation</td>
<td>b. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its transparent governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is an understanding of the need for an organisation-wide risk management policy</td>
<td>c. Systems are in place to ensure staff can initiate action to prevent and/or reduce the impact of risks</td>
<td>c. Contingency plans are developed to address possible areas of non-conformance to the plan</td>
<td>c. The organisation is recognised as a leader in risk management and commendations are received from third parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. The risk management system can identify system failures and opportunities by a standard reporting system</td>
<td>d. The risk management system can identify system failures and opportunities by a standard reporting system</td>
<td>d. A media communications strategy is in place to deal with when big things go wrong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Risk Management – Human Resources – Monitor Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. There is an awareness of the need to manage risks throughout the organisation</td>
<td>a. Senior management has allocated resources to risk management</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is reflective of current standards</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is compared externally with other risk management policies to identify aspects that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Legislative requirements relevant to risk management are met</td>
<td>b. Systems are in place to ensure staff can initiate action to prevent and/or reduce the impact of risks</td>
<td>b. There is a system for senior management to evaluate if the risk management policy is understood, implemented and maintained by all levels of the organisation and is reviewed at yearly intervals</td>
<td>b. The organisation demonstrates that it is a leader in its approach to risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The risk management policies include strategies for managing incidents and adverse events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. There is a communications strategy in place to advise staff/consumers/public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Staff are aware of the risk management policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Risk Management – Quality – Monitor Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Operational policies are developed in response to issues as they occur</td>
<td>a. There is an adherence to operating and management requirements</td>
<td>a. Operating and senior management requirements are regularly reviewed every 3 years to reflect current requirements</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is compared externally with other risk management policies to identify aspects that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The risk management policy includes strategies for managing incidents and adverse events</td>
<td>b. Staff are aware, at the operational level, of Industry guidelines, Codes of Practice and Codes of Ethics</td>
<td>b. The risk management policy is reviewed at least yearly in line with regulatory changes and relevant standards</td>
<td>b. Performance indicators for risk management are analysed and compared with similar internal and external systems and changes in processes are made, as required by senior management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is a comprehensive incident reporting mechanism in place</td>
<td>c. There is a system for monitoring compliance with policies and procedures</td>
<td>c. A blame free culture of enquiry and learning exists which reviews organisational systems rather than people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. There is an awareness of the need for consultation and communication about managing risks across the organisation</td>
<td>d. An integrated blame free system which identifies, reports and manages failures is in place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. A blame free culture exists across the organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Risk Management – Information Systems – Monitor Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The need for a disaster recovery system is understood</td>
<td>a. Backup data is stored off-site</td>
<td>a. A preventative maintenance system for IT is evaluated regularly and improved as required</td>
<td>a. Security systems and data recovery systems are compared externally and improvements made, as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. A strategy for disaster recovery is in place and includes a prioritisation schedule</td>
<td>b. A strategy for disaster recovery is in place and includes a prioritisation schedule</td>
<td>b. Performance indicators are used to eliminate and/or control risks to the IT system</td>
<td>b. The organisation is seen as a leader in IT risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is a planned system for preventative maintenance for IT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Security and virus detection backups are in place and used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Risk Management – Compliance – Monitor Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. There is a knowledge of all the relevant Federal, State and local Government legislation and requirements</td>
<td>a. Systems and procedures are followed and adhered to</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is revised at least yearly in line with regulatory changes and relevant standards</td>
<td>a. The systems used to address compliance requirements are compared with external systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Risk Management – Innovation and Change – Monitor Risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A culture exists and is fostered of continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to company systems and recommendations for improvements are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. There are regular yearly reviews of policies and practices by senior management</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader, and its policies and practices are compared with external systems, and improvements are made across the organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Risk Management – Planning and Leadership – Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Budgeting, reporting and auditing processes are in place consistent with legislative requirements</td>
<td>a. Financial systems, including asset management have been implemented</td>
<td>a. Monitoring of systems on financial performance are in place and communicated to relevant staff</td>
<td>a. Transparent governance together with components of the operational framework, are compared with external systems to identify processes that may be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Legislative requirements relevant to risk management are met</td>
<td>b. That financial risks are identified and protection strategies initiated in accordance with organisational procedures and policies</td>
<td>b. Key performance indicators are selected to enable ongoing monitoring of financial performance</td>
<td>b. The organisation is recognised as a leader in risk management and commendations are received from third parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is a policy to deal with fraud matters in place</td>
<td>c. There is an awareness by senior management of the Insolvency/Bankruptcy procedures for Directors of Company</td>
<td>c. Financial risk strategies are assessed for long-term viability (i.e., 5 years and longer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Risk Management – Human Resources - Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Legislative requirements relevant to risk management are met</td>
<td>a. Management has allocated resources to risk management</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is reflective of current standards</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is compared externally with other risk management policies to identify aspects that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Systems are in place to ensure staff can initiate action to prevent and/or reduce the impact of risks</td>
<td>b. There is a system for senior management to evaluate whether the risk management policy is understood, implemented and maintained by all levels of the organisation, and is reviewed at yearly intervals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. There is a strategy in place to deal with sudden death or serious injury to key senior management to ensure continuity of the organisation in the short term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. The organisation demonstrates that it is a leader in its approach to risk management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Risk Management – Quality – Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Operational policies are in place for legislative requirements</td>
<td>a. There is an adherence to operating and management requirements and systems</td>
<td>a. Operating and management requirements are reviewed at least yearly to reflect current requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. There is an awareness of the need for consultation and communication about managing risks across the organisation</td>
<td>b. Staff are aware, at the service level, of Industry guidelines, Codes of Practice and Code of Ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Performance indicators for risk management are analysed and compared with similar internal and external systems and changes in processes are made, as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is reviewed at least yearly in line with regulatory changes and relevant standards by senior management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Risk Management – Information Systems – Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The need for a disaster recovery system is understood</td>
<td>a. Backup data is stored off-site</td>
<td>a. Performance indicators are used to eliminate and/or control risks to the IT system</td>
<td>a. Security systems and data recovery systems are compared externally and improvements made as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. A strategy for disaster recovery is in place and includes a prioritisation schedule</td>
<td>b. IT project management is used to assist trouble free implementation of systems</td>
<td>b. The organisation is seen as a leader in IT risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. There is a planned system for preventative maintenance for IT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Security and virus detection backups are in place and used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Risk Management – Compliance – Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. There is a knowledge of all the relevant Federal, State and local Government legislation and requirements</td>
<td>a. Systems and procedures are followed and adhered to</td>
<td>a. The risk management policy is revised at least yearly in line with regulatory changes and relevant standards by senior management</td>
<td>a. The systems used to address compliance requirements are compared with external systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Risk Management – Innovation and Change – Finances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. A culture exists and is fostered of continuous improvement</td>
<td>a. Suggestions to company systems and recommendations for improvements are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a. There are regular yearly reviews of policies and practices by senior management</td>
<td>a. The organisation is recognised as a leader, and its policies and practices are compared with external systems, and improvements are made across the organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard Four – Client Management

This standard incorporates the Funeral Arrangement and Documentation. The intent of this standard and its criteria is to ensure that the focus is on the delivery of appropriate service levels meeting the needs of client families. Once again the underlying emphasis is on planning and leadership, where systems and resources are in place to ensure that client families’ funeral service needs are accurately identified and delivered to their expectations.

The Human Resources function ensures that staff are selected who have not only organisational, time management and stress management skills, but have personal integrity and ethics. In addition, they are aware of the various social, cultural and religious considerations.

Organisational performance and funeral service delivery is supported by Information Technology which ensures timely and accurate information. The Quality of funeral service provision focuses upon evaluation procedures and benchmarking other external providers to identify aspects that can be further improved.

The importance of Innovation and Change and the need to provide a culture of continuous improvement is complemented by compliance to ensure that Industry Codes of Practice are followed and systems are evaluated and any necessary improvements are made by senior management as required.
## Funerals, Arrangement and Documentation – Planning and Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Accurate identification of a family’s funeral service needs</td>
<td>a. Identification and scheduling of required personnel and resources demonstrating leadership and decision making skills</td>
<td>a. Systems are continually checked for limitations and any necessary changes are made as required by senior management</td>
<td>a. Benchmarking occurs against leading firms and competitors to identify aspects that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Accurate and legible recording of funeral arrangements in written format</td>
<td>b. The range and cost of funeral service options are explained clearly and accurately to client families</td>
<td>b. The organisation’s continuous quality improvement system demonstrates it is a leader in commitment to service delivery</td>
<td>b. The organisation’s continuous quality improvement system demonstrates it is a leader in commitment to service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Knowledge of relevant computer software programs</td>
<td>c. Liaison with relevant funeral and third parties to confirm final funeral arrangements, ordering of appropriate coffin/casket size</td>
<td>c. The organisation is recognised as a leader for quality within the funeral industry nationally and internationally</td>
<td>c. The organisation is recognised as a leader for quality within the funeral industry nationally and internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>d. Viewing proceedings are explained to family using clear and sensitive language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Ability and knowledge to follow appropriate protocols</td>
<td>e. Time constraints are sensitively enforced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Social, cultural and religious considerations, requirements and rituals are identified and respected</td>
<td>f. Time constraints are adhered to using effective personal time/stress management strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Funerals, Arrangement and Documentation – Human Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Ability to respect and maintain confidentiality and tact</td>
<td>a. Education/training is provided to ensure that families’ enquiries and requests are responded to with appropriate empathy and sensitivity</td>
<td>a. Policies and procedures are regularly evaluated and any necessary changes are made as required</td>
<td>a. Benchmarking occurs against other firms and competitors to identify aspects that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Literacy and numeracy skills</td>
<td>b. The range and cost of standard funeral service options are explained clearly and accurately to family</td>
<td>b. Staff appraisal process developed and evaluated</td>
<td>b. Systems for monitoring the performance of staff members is compared with those of other organisations and improvements are made as required by senior management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Ability to be able to work with and direct a team</td>
<td>c. The option of viewing the deceased person is offered and guidelines explained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Knowledge of workplace policies and procedures</td>
<td>d. Resources required to conduct the funeral are identified and organised as appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Stress management skills and ability to manage emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Personal integrity ethics and accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Organisation skills, time management skills, punctuality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Staff are aware of the need for attention to detail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Funerals, Arrangement and Documentation – Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Staff are aware of documentation procedures</td>
<td>a. The family is assisted in creating a funeral service that best suits their needs</td>
<td>a. Unforeseen events and varying circumstances are dealt with efficiently and professionally, minimising client distress or inconvenience</td>
<td>a. The organisation is benchmarked against other Australian and overseas firms through articles, meetings, industry training days to identify aspects that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. All documentation is thoroughly and accurately completed</td>
<td>b. The option of viewing the deceased person is offered and guidelines explained</td>
<td>b. Systems are evaluated against complaints and evaluation procedures, and appropriate recommendations adopted by senior management</td>
<td>b. The organisation’s continuous quality improvement system demonstrates it is a leader in commitment to service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Special requests or particular needs are identified through active questioning and consultation</td>
<td>c. Quotes are always provided to client families</td>
<td>c. Quotes are always provided to client families</td>
<td>c. The organisation is recognised as a leader for quality within the funeral industry nationally and internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Quotes are always provided to client families</td>
<td>d. Adherence to a best practice philosophy</td>
<td>d. Adherence to a best practice philosophy</td>
<td>d. Adherence to a best practice philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. All options and choices are adequately canvassed with family and pricing options agreed to at the time of the funeral arrangement</td>
<td>e. All options and choices are adequately canvassed with family and pricing options agreed to at the time of the funeral arrangement</td>
<td>e. All options and choices are adequately canvassed with family and pricing options agreed to at the time of the funeral arrangement</td>
<td>e. All options and choices are adequately canvassed with family and pricing options agreed to at the time of the funeral arrangement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Unforeseen events and varying circumstances

- Are dealt with efficiently and professionally, minimising client distress or inconvenience.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Awareness of the need for attention to detail</td>
<td>a. Systems are developed to ensure documentation is checked and correct</td>
<td>a. Documents and software system is evaluated and necessary improvements are made and communicated to staff</td>
<td>a. Benchmarking occurs against other firms locally, nationally and internationally to identify aspects of information systems that can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Staff and senior management needs for information are identified</td>
<td>b. IT systems are evaluated and improved to ensure user needs are met and licensing requirements are complied with</td>
<td>b. The organisation is identified as a leader in its ability to use information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Implementation of the IT strategy is evaluated at yearly intervals by senior management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Funerals, Arrangement and Documentation – Compliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Knowledge and understanding of relevant Federal, State and Local</td>
<td>a. Systems are followed and confidentiality maintained</td>
<td>a. The systems are evaluated and necessary improvements are made as</td>
<td>a. Benchmarking occurs against other firms nationally and overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government legislation and requirements</td>
<td>b. Completed funeral documentation is received and checked in accordance with</td>
<td>required by senior management</td>
<td>b. The organisation is recognised as a leader for its systems to address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Relevant documentation is prepared and completed in consultation with</td>
<td>workplace policies and procedures and applicable legislation and regulations</td>
<td>b. Industry Codes of Practice are followed</td>
<td>legislative requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the family and provided to them for endorsement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Final documentation is received and checked in accordance with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workplace policies and procedures and applicable legislation and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Funerals, Arrangement and Documentation – Innovation and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.  Awareness of need to be flexible and change practices to suit changing needs of consumers</td>
<td>a.  Suggestions to company systems and recommendations are actively encouraged by senior management</td>
<td>a.  There are regular yearly reviews of policies and procedures by senior management</td>
<td>a.  The organisation is recognised as a leader, and its policies and procedures are compared with external systems and improvements are made across the organisation by senior management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.  A culture exists of continuous improvement</td>
<td>b.  Ability and flexibility to embrace change by being adaptable</td>
<td></td>
<td>b.  An organisation wide culture exists that demonstrates that senior management is committed to and responsible for improving performance and service delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Two
Letter Requesting Participation as a Member of an Expert Group

Dear (Participant)

As you are aware from our previous discussion I am currently undertaking my Professional Doctorate in Business Administration in the School of Management at RMIT. My thesis topic is “The development of an Accreditation Model for funeral firms in Victoria”, and my supervisor is Dr Paul Gibson.

I wish to describe the major characteristics of the Funeral Industry in Victoria, as understood by key players in the Industry, in an endeavour to develop an Accreditation Model for Funeral Firms in Victoria.

Because of your experience in the Industry and role on the Licensing Committee, I wish to invite you to participate in my research as a member of an Expert Group to provide information and critique as I develop an Accreditation Model.

Your participation may involve up to six meetings, either in a focus group or a one on one interview, with meetings taking up to 1½ hours each. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

The date collected will be analysed for my thesis and the results may appear in publications. The results will be reported in a manner which does not enable you to be identified. Thus the reporting will protect your anonymity.

If you have any queries regarding this project please contact me, phone (03) 52223688 / email mking@kingsaustralia.com.au or my supervisor Dr Paul Gibson, phone (03) 99255945 / paul.gibson@rmit.edu.au, or the Chair of the RMIT Business Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee, phone (03) 9925 5593 / email rdu@rmit.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

Michael King
25 Myers Street
GEELONG VIC 3220
Appendix Three

Transcript of Group Interview

**Respondent One** – Former state and national President, who was instrumental in developing and promoting the AFDA Premises, Equipment and Vehicles policy (PEV) throughout Australia.

**Respondent Two** – Was an owner/operator of a medium-sized firm in country Victoria. He supported licensing and was a former state president and member at a national industry level.

**Respondent Three** – A highly respected life member of AFDA / AIE and a small independent funeral director in Melbourne who strongly supported licensing.

**Respondent Four** – Victorian manager of Australia’s largest funeral firm and as a former Victorian President of the AFDA played a key role in advocating the need for licensing for the industry. As President put the issue on the agenda, and ensured that the AFDA was engaged with the union in supporting the process. Once the Inquiry was established, he allowed the Chairman to take the lead and work load. He handed the presidency to Respondent 7 in August 2004.

**Respondent Five** – General Manager of a large metropolitan firm with a national presence. He held senior positions at a state and national industry level.

**Respondent Six** – CEO of a large Melbourne based funeral business and was elected chairman of the committee at its first meeting. The committee let him take a leading role, particularly in the drafting of the report, and he consistently advocated for a minimalist approach and the need to consult with the wider AFDA membership. He realised the need to have valid responses backed by research.

**Respondent Seven** – Became State President half way through the licensing inquiry. From a small rural firm in Victoria, he allowed the Chairman and Respondent Four to be the main spokespersons.

**The Researcher** – Took a leading role as a participant in the committee process. Mainly took notes of meetings and the participant’s various comments for observational research purposes.

**Mr Gerard Nelson** – Was an industrial relations consultant, with a background in the Army. He was engaged by three firms associated with the industry and with Respondent Four led the process for regulation. He was a key driver in the process of licensing as a consultant.
Health Sector Respondents

Respondent A – Former nurse who became involved with the board of a major provincial hospital for over forty years. This hospital was the first accredited within Australia in the 1970s. She has been involved with the Australian Council of Health Services (ACHS) for over thirty years as a board member. Elected president during the 1990’s when the new accreditation model was introduced in the health sector.

Respondent B – Graduated as a doctor in 1969 and became involved as a part-time quality manager at a Sydney hospital after re-entering the workforce. This led to being employed by ACHS where she was directly responsible for writing and implementing the new accreditation model for the health sector.

Meeting Commenced: 8.55am

Present: Respondent 1, Respondent 2, Respondent 3, Respondent 4, Respondent 5, Respondent 6
Apology: Respondent 7
(see Appendix Seven for background of Respondents).

Introduction

RESEARCHER: Thank you all sincerely for coming, I really do appreciate it. Just a little background before we start, this draft model has been derived from my concerns about standards in the industry, government regulations and rising consumer demands. Some industries are either deciding to self regulate or have regulations imposed upon them by Government. Our licensing sub committee, which this expert panel has been derived from has been facing some of those issues as an industry. Within this context the provisional draft accreditation model before you was developed. It was devised from an extensive literature search of what makes firms organisationally effective. Six major characteristics emerged which were incorporated in the model. From that four standards were developed which grouped the different elements of funeral service provision into the provisional model that is before you. Your task is to critique and validate this model as an expert panel. It is anticipated that the process of this group interview and the next telephone interview will detail what areas
of funeral provision are not included, what should be included, what’s missing, what’s clear and what’s not clear. The interview will last up to an hour and a half, and discuss what you think are the major characteristics important for funeral firms to be effective. This interview is a means of understanding the issues that are confronting funeral firms no matter what their sizes are, and those types of issues should identified in the accreditation model that I’ve developed. At the end of this interview, you’ll be handed the questions that will be asked in the next telephone interview regarding the model that has been developed.

RESEARCHER: In your opinion, what are the most important concerns facing funeral firms today?

RESPONDENT 4: Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) issues, and their costs and management of systems would be our largest challenges.

RESEARCHER: Litigation?

RESPONDENT 4: Yes, but I’m more concerned with OHS and the opportunities for unions to hit the industry with pin notices for practices that in the past were always regarded as alright but now with regulations, audits and Workcover these once commonplace practices are of concern. You now have OHS committees with meetings to organise, planning on how to address issues eg. Placement of bodies in coffins and on stretchers, which were once considered standard practices are now an issue if staff are not trained, as the onus of litigation is on the company.

RESPONDENT 1: I believe consumerism, not litigation is of concern. Situations once regarded as accidents, error or mistakes where an apology was an acceptable outcome are now situations with increased demand for retribution or compensation.

RESPONDENT 4: Yes, I can cite a recent example, where a family chose to carry the coffin at a country cemetery but changed their mind at the last moment so staff stepped in. The coffin was oversized and the female staff member rolled her ankle while walking and the coffin dipped. At the time the family were most concerned for the staff member but two days later they were looking for compensation for the emotional effects of witnessing the dipping of the coffin.

RESPONDENT 6: I see compensation for psychological and not physical injury as a growing concern with both staff and families. We are dealing with the intangible issues of a deceased person which opens up a big mine field. For example, a staff member is currently on
Workcare for emotional trauma from seeing a Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA) victim, an event that is common in our industry but the emotional effect cannot be measured on an individual. The physical injuries can be addressed and there is already a reduction in these due to OHS practices, but the psychological issues are on the increase.

RESPONDENT 4: Yes, I agree it is a big concern. We dropped the police coroners’ contract for that very reason as staff were witnessing all types of difficult situations.

RESEARCHER: We have discussed OHS and litigation, but do you have any other concerns?

RESPONDENT 4: An increase in competition with the undercutting of prices by smaller funeral operators, who we know are falsely advertising, but we can’t expose them even though we know that what is offered is not delivered.

RESPONDENT 3: The retention of staff and the need for ongoing training. There is the issue of how to overcome burnout and stress. Selection of staff and ongoing training are vital to address these issues.

RESPONDENT 5: Does anybody have a psychological test for potential employees?

RESPONDENT 4: Yes, we have done so for about six years but people still get through the net. It is quite expensive testing and I really don’t know if it is beneficial. We had one staff member touted as being management material but in reality he could barely tie his shoelace! A bigger challenge is the industrial relations issue; you can’t get rid of unsuitable staff. A three months probation is not enough, you need six or twelve months.

RESPONDENT 1: I see changing consumer expectations as a major concern. There is a move from seeing the funeral as a ritual to seeing it as an event, which requires highly creative and organised staff who are different from the typical personnel in the funeral industry. Funerals are becoming events requiring event management with a huge challenge to organise them in three or so days.

RESEARCHER: Is the pay level an issue?

RESPONDENT 6: Yes, it is an issue to attract such people as well as the fact that current funeral staff may not be suited to event management.

RESPONDENT 1: There is also a concern regarding the ability to charge for such detailed organisation and management. The extra time and effort in creating these ‘events’ is not
related to current charges but entitles a charge that reflects the more complex nature of the funeral. I would consider these things to be more challenges than concerns.

RESPONDENT 4: Yes, the change in consumer expectations is a challenge and not a concern. For example, we have various Asian cultural issues, distinct to particular groups that we have dealt with. The making of ‘events’ with plasma screens and projectors are very expensive. There is an expectation from families who have seen this at certain chapels for it to be available to them and so individual funeral directors are expected to keep abreast of this technology in their chapels. It costs around $30 000 to set up and is expensive when you are looking at multiple chapel locations.

RESPONDENT 5: The issue is then do you charge to recoup these set up expenses or do you offer them as a free offer as a marketing tool?

RESPONDENT 2: We have just in the past 12 months purchased such equipment as opposed to hiring it in and outsourcing the preparation. We now offer presentations prepared by us solely, and charge a similar price to the hiring costs. They are very popular and the set up costs were significantly lower than the $30 000 mentioned.

RESPONDENT 1: Yes, things such as offering refreshments, whether that be a complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits, or more complex menus are now almost an expectation and add complexity.

RESEARCHER: We touched on the retention of staff and some have mentioned the hiring of consultants as opposed to doing the tasks ourselves. As this has implications for quality control and contract management, is it likely for this outsourcing to increase, and is this dependent on the size of the company?

RESPONDENT 4: As younger people come into the industry the skill level for AV/technology will increase but current industry staff may struggle with such innovation. Errors such as playing the wrong music, or having AV presentations not work mean that the consumer is unhappy which reflects back on the company, so skill levels need to improve.

RESPONDENT 5: Also, for those larger firms with multiple chapels there is a need for more staff able to use such technology and therefore costs increase.

RESPONDENT 6: The categories of staff have increased over the past 15-20 years. Where previously you had a funeral arranger / conductor, funeral assistant, embalmer, transfer staff
you now require roles such as AV technician, community educator, etc. Smaller firms are required to have multi-skilled staff.

RESPONDENT 5: Yes, this can be difficult for smaller firms.

RESPONDENT 4: The big challenge at the start of each year is how to meet the salary bill, so the maximum output is required of staff.

RESPONDENT 5: If you are offering service sheets, etc you need to make money to do so.

RESEARCHER: From discussion it would appear that staying profitable is a huge concern. Do you think there is appropriate management training in place to know how to stay profitable?

RESPONDENT 5: I know that our managers have done a fair amount of financial training so I would hope so!

RESPONDENT 6: I think this is a critical question. There is a squeeze on revenue with more competitors in an industry that is flat on demand. There is a need to be creative with revenue which may see more outsourcing and rationalisation of companies. An example of this was our in-house training which was then offered outside the company as it was already set up anyway. This could work with transfers etc with the rationale being that we all do transfers, embalming, vehicle driving and wait for first calls overnight. These could be centrally coordinated instead of each separate company waiting all hours for that call to come in. Companies may have to be prepared to engage outside consultants.

RESPONDENT 5: I believe that a non-AFDA firm have recently sold all their sedans and hire in cars as required. They still have their hearses, of course.

RESPONDENT 4: Individual transfer groups are also growing. It wouldn’t have been heard on in the past to let someone else handle our transfers, but economics now play a part and it may be more economical to do this very thing.

RESEARCHER: Do you think the concerns are led by our experiences as companies in the industry, or are they driven by a client push?

RESPONDENT 2: I think in the smaller organisations that each company is pro-active in what they are doing. For example, I had an outside consultant come in to suggest how things might be better managed, which was costly so I hoped that they did have something to say! It
was costly but thankfully turned out to be very beneficial with many savings being experienced now due to us doing things in a better way than previously. Smaller companies have quiet times when staff need to be utilised in a productive manner. We have saved costs in areas such as producing our own service booklets rather than outsourcing as in the past. There is a set template on the computer with prices ranging from around $1 to $4.50 so they are cost effective. Our in-house audio-visual (AV) set up is another area plus our rosters have altered so that now we have one full time staff member on for a week with a part timer rather than two staff on for 3 days, then off for 2. All these changes have been driven internally.

RESEARCHER: Have consumers driven any of the concerns?

RESPONDENT 1: I think it is a combination of both consumer and internal. Other countries’ ideas, such as North America, can be adapted to suit our industry.

RESEARCHER: Is consumer management a concern?

RESPONDENT 4: I think the funeral industry is a lot more visible now than in the past. The TV program Six Feet Under, and other media attention has improved the visibility.

RESPONDENT 1: I think an awareness of consumerism is enough to lead us into the future.

RESPONDENT 6: Yes, if we see this as a concern and not a challenge then I think we should leave the industry! Customers are our concern. Consumerism is a reality and so we need to keep raising the bar.

RESPONDENT 4: A challenge I see is that soon there is going to be a significant increase in the death rate. We need to be prepared for that with the correct staff and facilities. We need to look to other industries for people with the potential to work in our industry. Succession planning is important.

RESEARCHER: So there is a challenge to recruit suitable staff?

RESPONDENT 3: Over the past 2-3 years there has been an increase in the likelihood of funerals being held further away from the date of death. It used to be fairly standard for funerals to be within three days or so of death, but nowadays this may be a week or so. This raises logistical issues such as the situation of having more bodies to store on the premises for longer periods of time.
RESPONDENT 4: I think this is a good thing. I’m a great believer in encouraging people to take time to plan funerals. Three days is a rush. If families wait they feel more ready and prepared.

RESPONDENT 2: Yes, there is a reason for the delay. We can now offer much more than in the past. The words ‘celebrate life’ are now frequently heard so time is needed to prepare booklets, visual aids, venues such as public places, ovals etc and so a five, six, even eight day time frame is beneficial. It also highlights our ability to be able to care for the body through mortuary facilities and embalming methods.

RESEARCHER: Have staff levels increased even though the death rate hasn’t?

RESPONDENT 4: No, I would say we have had a decrease over the last five years of around 20%. The Coroners Court has changed also. In the past bodies were available for release much sooner, nowadays there can be up to a three day wait. There has also been a move away from religious based services and so quality civil celebrants are required. This is tricky with the level of quality ranging from A – Z with good ones in demand. Sometimes the civil celebrant sees themselves as the “star of the show” and the person in the coffin is forgotten or just an excuse for the celebrant to take centre stage. The funeral should be about the family, not the celebrant. Who trains the celebrants?

RESPONDENT 2: The bigger companies need their funeral directors to guide the celebrants, possibly even interviewing them and stating what is required as the celebrants level of professionalism will be seen by families as a reflection of the funeral company.

RESEARCHER: What is your understanding of what an accreditation model is?

RESPONDENT 2: I have been involved with hospital accreditation in a small country town, so I would say accreditation means that every aspect of a funeral has to reach the pinnacle: vehicles, staff, arrangement etc, and their needs to be work in each separate area to make sure they all reach the top. Accreditation for me is striving for the public’s approval because they are the judges of it. For example, if staff smoking in hearses or out the front of funeral venues, anyone could drive past, not even attached to the funeral, and pass judgement on this. The public set the goals but I believe we are on the right track to continually improve.

RESPONDENT 4: I see accreditation as an audit in a number of specific areas, such as Staff Training, Occupational Health and Safety, vehicles, systems including accounting, mortuary,
embalmers etc. It is an audit on every part to reach a standard, that standard being set either within the company or for us by the AFDA.

RESPONDENT 1: It has to do with compliance as well.

RESPONDENT 2: Yes, along the lines of the AFDA Premises, Equipment and Vehicles (PEV) guidelines. Should the people doing these inspections be trained?

RESPONDENT 4: Yes, if it was to be serious, it should be independent based and administered similar to a tax audit.

RESPONDENT 3: I see accreditation as being related to service delivery and therefore I’m not comfortable with the draft model’s inclusion of the business planning area. I don’t think such areas of a company should be open for public acceptance. A business plan is certainly a sensible thing to have, but I’m not sure if it should be part of external accreditation.

RESPONDENT 4: Some clients are happy with the poorer standards we know are on offer from certain companies, but are we happy for that for the industry? We should be able to open the door for all aspects of the company to prove credibility.

RESPONDENT 3: Yes, I agree with that, but whether I meet a business plan is separate to client/customer service, hence my comment that accreditation shouldn’t include this.

RESPONDENT 5: Yes I agree that accreditation should be with regard to our client dealings.

RESPONDENT 4: Aren’t they two separate issues? OHS and tax requirements are expectations.

RESPONDENT 3: Yes, I’m not referring to legal requirements.

RESPONDENT 4: An audit would assist with weeding out such issues as cheaper firms not paying Workcover payments, or offering cash to gain funerals.

RESEARCHER: Should all firms be accredited?

RESPONDENT 4: Personally I think yes. There is a challenge for larger firms that they train someone in a management role, providing them with many contacts and then that person may then go out and set up alone, outsourcing mortuary care, transfers, hearses etc. If accreditation was carried out in all areas it would affect their ability to be able to do this.
RESPONDENT 6: I think accreditation should reflect the submission made by the AFDA with there being minimum requirements/standards to be met, including knowledge, experience and credibility. Detailed accreditation would make us all clones of each other. Accreditation should work in a voluntary way, such as us all being members of the AFDA, belonging to something that gives credibility.

RESPONDENT 5: Accreditation should never be an entrance impediment. For example, if a company hired a hearse, it would want to be sure that the vehicle met required standards. There should be standards set and monitored, but a model should not act in a preventative way.

RESPONDENT 4: There should be minimum standards.

RESPONDENT 5: Training of inspectors should be a requirement also. Are the PEV inspectors trained enough? The AFDA should have expectations that independent people should be trained.

RESEARCHER: So, what is the difference between licensing and accreditation?

RESPONDENT 6: Licensing should be the bare minimum requirements to operate and the licence could be taken away if critical issues were breeched (such as embalming etc). The analogy of the legal system is good, all lawyers receive their articles but they then can go on to be accredited in specialist areas. Accreditation is like an extra level of competency, a choice a company makes to “lend it credibility”.

RESPONDENT 2: I believe funeral firms need to be licensed. Has the public been surveyed to gauge what accreditation means to them?

RESPONDENT 5: The recent survey of the public regarding regulation of the funeral industry showed that people were shocked that there weren’t already rules in place and therefore people may make similar choices with regard to accreditation.

RESPONDENT 2: I see licensing and accreditation as being different. Licensing would make a big difference to the industry but would accreditation? I think not.

RESPONDENT 1: It’s a little like the car and tow truck industries. Licensing has cleaned them both up, but whether companies are accredited or not doesn’t matter.

RESPONDENT 5: Accreditation and licensing may be different words for the same thing.
RESPONDENT 6: it can be used as an all embracing term.

RESEARCHER: So can you do without it?

RESPONDENT 6: The funeral industry has a distinct lack of comfort with anything too complicated. There are practical considerations.

RESEARCHER: What would you see as the key characteristics that make an organisation effective?

RESPONDENT 6: adaptability

RESPONDENT 1: Structure, and the size of the company would determine this. Reputation is also up there as being important, it is hard to earn and hard to maintain.

RESPONDENT 4: The quality of the staff. If the staff are good and morale is good then the company will perform well due to having motivated people. People need to understand their roles and correct management structures need to be in place. Nowadays any business looking to keep themselves sharp needs multi-skilled, quality staff with the right attitude.

RESPONDENT 1: There needs to be a balance of multi-skilled and specialist staff.

RESPONDENT 4: A defined career path may be required by staff, even above monetary issues.

RESPONDENT 2: It all comes back to the staff. Regardless of client family wants, the staff needs to be able to handle all these requirements without outsourcing them. Even in a small organisation we have to have that level of staff: embalmers, counsellors, technology specialists and celebrants. Our staff are all in-house, excepting catering which I’m glad about! There has to be a staff willingness to improve with further education. The ability for staff to handle all a family’s requirements is a cost saving to the company.

RESPONDENT 6: There needs to be a preparedness to change and adapt. Competency needs to be there from day one, but companies that can evolve and adapt have survived and prospered. Those with the castle surrounded by a moat outlook have struggled. A large non-AFDA firm may be one such company which has struggled due to a siege mentality. They struggle because they are not adaptable.
RESPONDENT 4: That is correct. Some companies have instability due to poor management at the top or family operated businesses with instability. If such problems exist at the top then they come down the line also.

RESPONDENT 1: Yes, over thirty years ago there were some funeral companies that were household names but they are now gone or have been taken over. I believe this is because they may have had no succession plan or were unwilling to embrace change.

RESPONDENT 4: A once highly regarded firm in the 1970’s is an example of this. They had no son to take over the business and didn’t trust an outsider to act as manager and therefore did not survive. With a succession plan they may have.

RESEARCHER: We have mentioned Innovation & Change, HR, Quality but not Information Technology (IT).

RESPONDENT 4: Computer systems, training, and keeping systems up to date are a nightmare within themselves.

RESPONDENT 1: Companies almost need a business plan for this area.

RESPONDENT 6: You can’t impose IT on companies though. Some companies may manage well without computer systems due to their size.

RESPONDENT 5: Whereas larger companies may need more IT systems in place due to the larger amount of funerals being conducted.

RESPONDENT 6: Once we begin to deal with cemeteries and suppliers on line this will make things much easier.

RESPONDENT 4: The Government Statistician is an example of online benefits for them. We do all their work by inputting data and registering online, yet all at our expense and time.

RESEARCHER: On the subject of Best Practice, how can we identify best practice or benchmark with others within and outside of the industry?

RESPONDENT 4: A current large Melbourne based family firm have always been regarded as a leader, providing items such as plasma screens, extended limos etc. They are always able to plan and provide this to the community.
RESPONDENT 5: Should we have accreditation then, as there are others without a profile like the large Melbourne based family firm who may be able to offer other services as well?

RESPONDENT 6: It is hard to benchmark within the industry and to be certain you are comparing apples with apples. For example historically a large Melbourne based family firm has been known as the Catholic provider and another the civil provider.

RESEARCHER: Which, if any, external industries do you think we could benchmark with?

RESPONDENT 6: Hospitality, hotels and tourism areas, all provide comfort, service and caring personal services, although not directly on par to the funeral industry.

RESPONDENT 4: What about overseas funeral companies? Could we compare to say, Hong Kong where they do thousands of funerals, dealing on a much bigger scale.

RESPONDENT 2: I have experienced a wide variety of overseas funeral companies and their marketing skills, particularly Canada and US would stand out. They market anything you can conceive. Ten years ago they were marketing anniversary cards, cremated remains trinkets, photos, videos, overseas links to services etc.

RESPONDENT 6: But often in the lowest common denominator type of way.

RESPONDENT 2: Things such as buildings with caskets on top!

RESPONDENT 5: Some buildings have multi-chapel rooms to accommodate the large number of services.

RESPONDENT 4: We have Asian immigrants here from whom we can learn.

RESPONDENT 6: I think we learn more by benchmarking from outside the funeral industry and adapting to suit our needs/requirements.

RESPONDENT 1: The World War 2 immigration influx changed the Australian industry and funeral culture irrevocably. For example, the Italian culture of rosaries etc introduces us to move to more preparation time and other cultural funeral rituals.

RESPONDENT 3: Melbourne being so cosmopolitan has us more prepared than say Sydney.

RESPONDENT 1: We also have the opportunity to employ funeral staff with various cultural backgrounds.
RESEARCHER: Aside from OHS and Litigation, what do you see as the biggest risk areas confronting the funeral industry?

RESPONDENT 1: For those in the quality area I would say that we don’t price ourselves out of the market. There needs to be a balance of profitability with what is being offered.

RESPONDENT 4: Getting paid for funerals is a major concern to me. I know we own many graves around Melbourne that we have never been paid for. We have a huge wage bill to meet and so bad debts are a huge concern. Training managers and debt collectors have assisted, but there are still write offs. We now try to get 50% of grave and interment fees prior but this does not always happen.

RESPONDENT 1: The fact that credit cards can be used to pay has shifted the onus back on to the client a little more.

RESEARCHER: Do you see unions as a risk?

RESPONDENT 4: Do you mean the AWU? We have seen a drop off of membership with people running scared due to the Howard Industrial Relations Act to be introduced. Personally I think we will win the war regarding unions.

RESPONDENT 2: I see overcapitalisation combined with bad debt as a risk, even for established firms who may decide to undertake some renovations or buy a new vehicle, and suddenly the numbers drop off and they could be in trouble.

RESPONDENT 6: The real sleeper risk I believe is alternate products, such as cardboard coffins. As we move from the traditional funeral rituals of seeing a funeral service as a ‘celebration of life’, we may see that the coffin is not as important to families. Memorial services may in fact, have no coffin even present. As a large amount of our profitability is currently in the coffin sales area, we will need to look at re-adjusting costings. The direct selling of coffins to the consumer, which already happens in the industry, is another part of this issue.

RESPONDENT 5: Do you think that the funeral director may become less relevant?

RESPONDENT 6: Yes. Memorial services could be arranged by the transfer company, coffin sold directly and therefore the funeral director would not even be required.
RESPONDENT 2: Those changes are already happening in the industry, the shift to memorial service only, with a delivery only and then a memorial service at night arranged by the family with no funeral director required.

RESEARCHER: Thank you very much to all for your participation. Here is the next set of questions to allow you to prepare for the individual phone interviews.

Meeting closed: 10.20am