

# Funeral Industry Innovations Put to the Safety Test

TestSafe Australia, in recent years has been forging strong links with various clients in the funeral industry and with its industry associations. These clients are seeking to introduce a range of new products that are both environmentally and ergonomically friendly, and are vitally concerned that they meet relevant safety standards.

## Innovation in Funeral Casket Design



*Natalie Verdon of LifeArt showing off a colourful Enviroboard Coffin*

In 2004 LifeArt Australia Pty Ltd., introduced a line of funeral caskets made from 80% cardboard and 20% wood, after having completed a full regime of safety testing at TestSafe Australia. LifeArt has subsequently published the full report on its website. According to LifeArt's Natalie Verdon, *"the goal was to design a coffin that reduced the impact on the environment, while at the same time met the Funeral Industry Council's requirements of a safe modern funeral. Since the*

*launch of these Enviroboard coffins, with their bright and often artistic designs, they have become increasingly commonplace at funeral services, burials and cremations".*

Another Australian company, OnEarth Australia now manufactures an environmentally friendly funeral casket made totally from 100% recycled cardboard. Rigorous structural integrity testing (up to 120kgs) was undertaken at TestSafe on typical caskets in August 2006 to determine how they would react when subjected to the kind of handling required by the funeral industry (including handling when damp or being stored in cold rooms). The caskets tested were firstly placed in cold storage (3<sup>o</sup> Celsius for 7 days) and then proof-load tested to the relevant standard. The caskets passed these tests. (See TestSafe Report published on OnEarth Australia website)



*A cardboard coffin undergoing a lift test whilst filled with sandbags*

Inevitably cardboard coffins will provide an alternative to the heavier timber and chipboard varieties. Due to their lightness, they also have obvious manual handling advantages for funeral directors and their staff, pallbearers, and cemetery/crematoria employees. According to Ivor Hay, Managing Director of OnEarth Australia,

*“With rising costs of funerals, customers are demanding low-cost and environmentally friendly options when planning a funeral. These caskets are also attracting the interest of people throughout Australia who are looking for a bush or green burial”.*

### Lightweight Coffin Handles



The gradual change in funeral services away from over-the shoulder pall bearing has placed a greater need for safe lightweight coffin handles when bearing caskets. Recently TestSafe has been testing a range of ingeniously designed lightweight plastic coffin handles for a client to determine their relative strength and durability.

### Grave Covers



*A Grave Cover prior to testing*

Cemeteries are mostly community-based facilities and open to the general public, the funeral industry has become concerned that open freshly dug gravesites constitute a potential hazard both to the passer-by and to funeral attendees. A strong grave cover has been developed by an industry client which will prevent anyone from falling in to the freshly dug grave. Please note the relative strength of the cover shown below.



*790 Kg Load Test on Grave Cover*