

Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW

# Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance

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Cemetery maintenance guide

February 2020



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# Part 1—Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the *Voluntary code of practice for cemetery maintenance*—otherwise referred to in this document as the Cemetery Maintenance Guide—is to help cemetery operators seeking to implement the *Cemetery and crematorium operator code of practice—Interment rights and general services*—or the Operator Code.

The Operator Code is regulated by Cemeteries & Crematoria New South Wales (CCNSW), a statutory body that was established in 2014 under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*. CCNSW is led by an independent board (CCNSW Board) appointed by, and responsible to, the Minister for Water, Property and Housing. A business unit led by the CCNSW Chief Executive Officer within the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment supports the CCNSW Board.

The Cemetery Maintenance Guide gives practical advice to help operators ensure that they can address Part 8 of the Operator Code relating to maintenance of facilities, graves, vaults, cemeteries and crematoria. In doing so, the Cemetery Maintenance Guide is designed to help the industry meet the relevant objects of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* including those to:

- (a) recognise the right of all individuals to a dignified interment and treatment of their remains with dignity and respect
- (d) provide for the operation of a consistent and coherent regime for the governance and regulation of cemeteries and crematoria
- (e) ensure that the operators of cemeteries and crematoria demonstrate satisfactory levels of accountability, transparency and integrity
- (g) promote environmental sustainability of the interment industry, including provision for natural and private burials.\*

\*These are an abridged version of the objects. Please see the legislation for the full version.

This relationship is further outlined in Section 1.3 of this document.

## 1.2 Scope

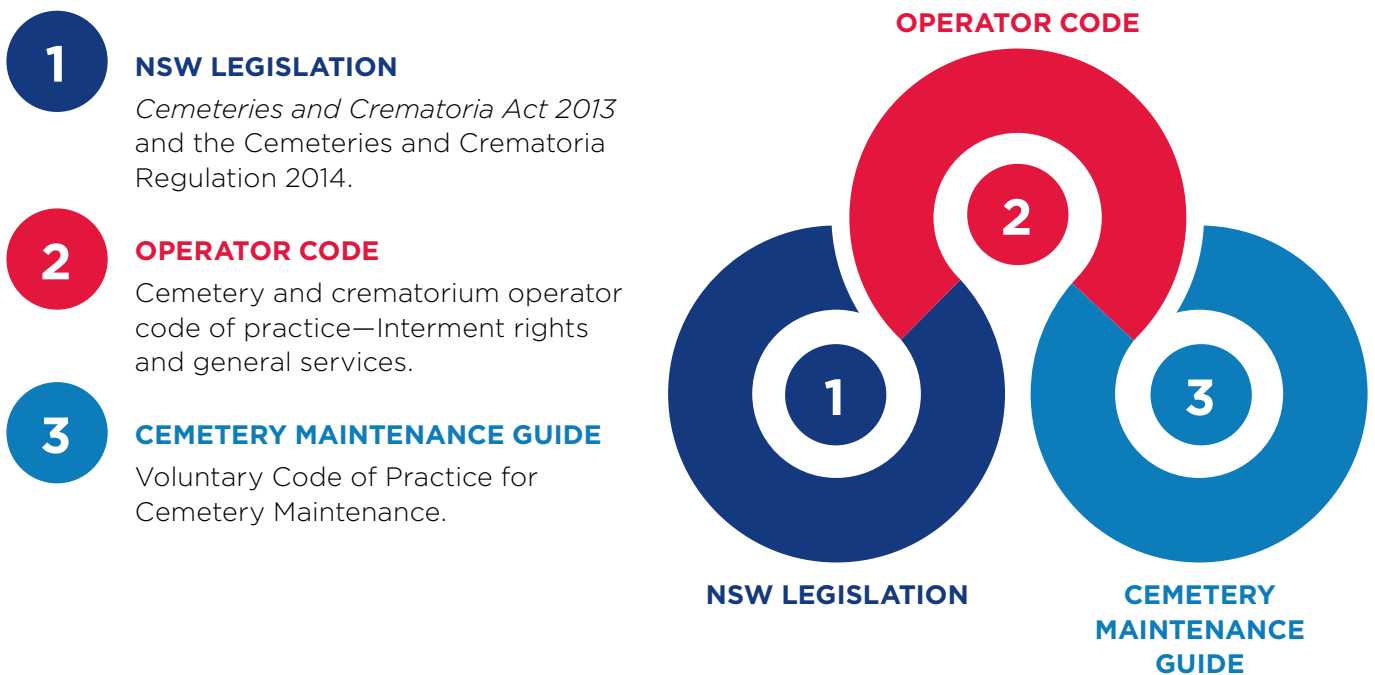
The Cemetery Maintenance Guide is not designed to give comprehensive details about all issues associated with cemetery maintenance. Instead, it is designed to highlight best-practice principles and directions that can help operators establish and improve on their cemeteries over time and in line with community expectations and available resources. It provides a range of practical examples, references for further information, and ways that different issues relate to the legislative and regulatory context of cemetery operations. The principles and directions provided are generally applicable to both operational cemeteries and those that are closed to new interments.

### 1.3 Policy context/framework

The Cemetery Maintenance Guide is related to, and provides extra information to respond to, the Operator Code. The Operator Code was developed by Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW, the state government agency responsible for the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and the Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulation 2014—the underpinning legislative framework for the provision of interment services and interment rights in NSW.

Section 28 of the Act provides for Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW to develop codes of practice to give guidance on interment or other matters set out in the objects of Act. This Cemetery Maintenance Guide therefore aims to further the objects of the Act by facilitating high-quality practices across the interment industry while providing the flexibility necessary for operators of different scales and situations to implement appropriate measures to best meet community expectations. The legislative and policy framework is presented below.

Figure 1. Legislative and policy framework



The Cemetery Maintenance Guide comprises three parts as follows:

- Part 1—Introduction—this part
- Part 2—Cemetery maintenance context
- Part 3—Cemetery maintenance themes

The second part provides an overview of cemeteries in the context of their scale and size, recognising that there are varied forms of cemeteries and cemetery operators within NSW.

This section also provides some high-level ‘key principles’ for context and the basis for determining the importance of cemeteries. These are considered further throughout Part 3 of the document.

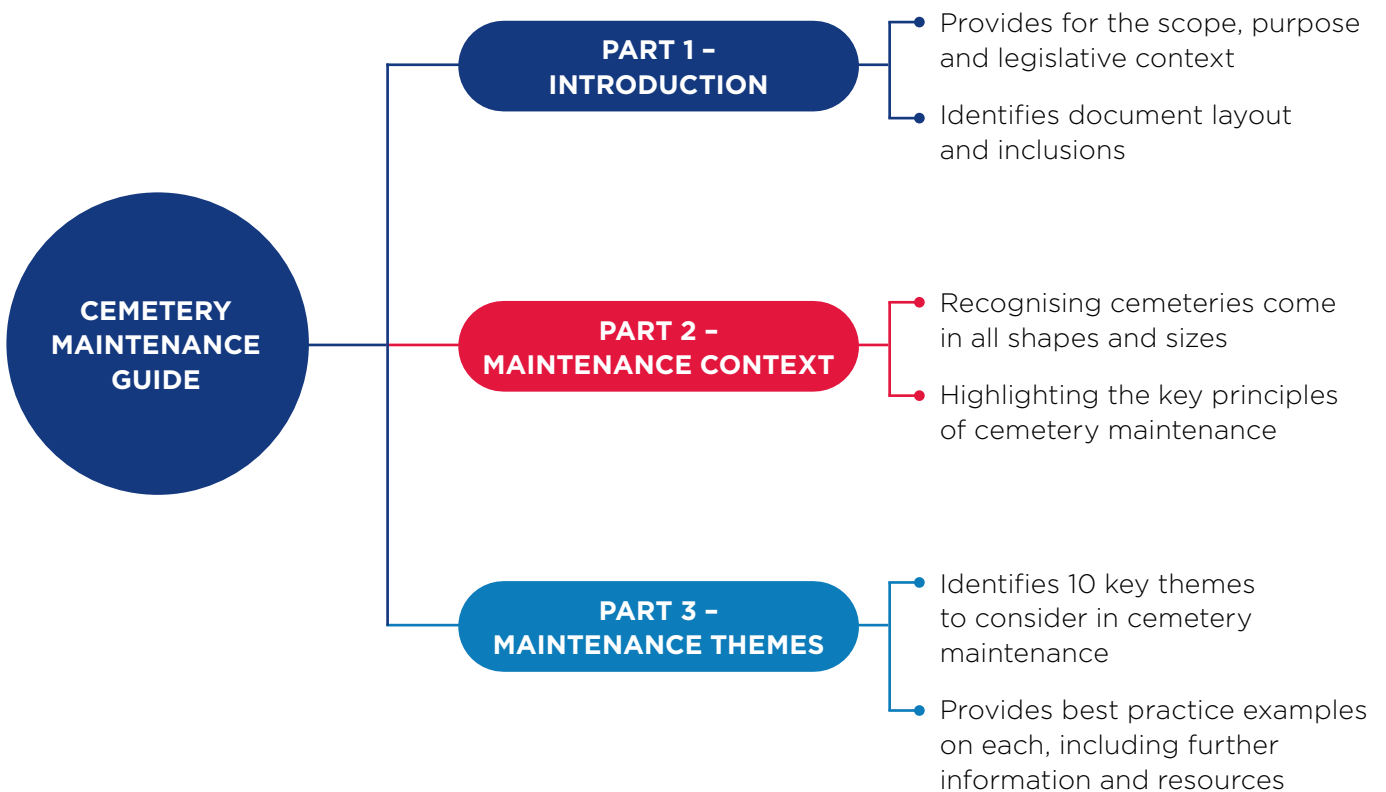
## Part 1 Introduction

Part 3 provides the bulk of the guide, identifying the wide array of components that fall under the broad areas of 'cemetery maintenance'. Each theme is presented across six areas as follows:

- Background
- Best-practice principles
- Best-practice implementation
- Relevant legislation
- Key resources
- Key organisations

It is reiterated that the guide is a largely principles-based document. Operators can refer to the information under the above headings for more detail.

**Figure 2. Structure of the Cemetery maintenance guide**



# Part 2—Cemetery maintenance context

Part 2 of the Cemetery Maintenance Guide gives an overview of the context of the cemetery sector in NSW, highlighting two areas of broad consideration:

- Firstly, the scale and type of operational cemeteries that are present in NSW
- Secondly, the broad-based principles that typically apply to cemetery maintenance

Consider the 'hierarchy' of cemetery types and how these key principles apply to different aspects of cemetery maintenance before referencing more details in Part 3.

**The icons for each scale and type of cemetery, and for each principle, will be used throughout the remainder of the document.**

## 2.1 A hierarchy of cemeteries

We have developed a hierarchy of three cemetery types, recognising that maintenance expectations will vary between different types of facilities—there is rarely a 'one size fits all' approach that applies. We therefore use the hierarchy throughout the remainder of this document to differentiate between the realistic expectations for each cemetery type.



### Local cemetery

Local cemeteries are typically the smallest of cemeteries. These include most village or churchyard cemeteries, which typically have less than one hectare of used cemetery space and service a small or discrete population. The number of interments each year is limited, perhaps only one or two in any given year, but it could be up to 10 or 15. These types of cemeteries are typically found in regional and rural locations.



### District cemetery

District cemeteries are larger than local cemeteries and typically service a series of smaller populations or an entire small town and its surrounding population catchment. These cemeteries often contain between one and five hectares of used cemetery space, and have moderate levels of use, averaging one or more interments at least every one or two weeks, or between 20 and 100 each year.



### Regional cemetery

Regional cemeteries are the largest and most frequently used type of cemetery. These are more substantial in size and cater for a broader catchment, such as a major town or entire local government area. These facilities typically cater for anywhere between 100 and up to hundreds of interments each year. Regional cemeteries will sometimes contain onsite crematorium, chapel and administrative services and are typically found in main population centres or regional cities.

Many cemeteries have been in operation for long periods, while others are no longer operational. The ability to change or reconfigure some cemeteries may be limited. No two cemeteries are the same and this is recognised in applying this voluntary code of practice.

### 2.2 Key maintenance principles

These are the key recurring principles that apply to many of the maintenance themes identified in Part 3 of this document. They are explained further within the context of each theme in the subsequent pages.



#### Welcoming

Being welcoming refers to the feelings people have for a locality and the meaning that they gain from relating to that space, evoking a strong sense of place. Given the importance of cemeteries and that users will often be experiencing intense feelings, operators should ensure that cemeteries are welcoming, aesthetically pleasing and the cemetery layout is easily understood, particularly in high-use areas such as site entries and car parks. These are key elements to ensuring a positive sense of place for visitors.



#### Safe

As operational sites that are generally freely available for public access, safety is a critical operational consideration. Cemetery safety includes the ability for people to move around the cemetery in a safe manner—for example avoiding conflicts with vehicles or contact with monuments that are not appropriately secured. Cemeteries should also be secure, free from discrimination or bias, and easily accessible through use of appropriate signage and design elements.



#### Efficient

Cemetery maintenance can be very expensive. Given many cemetery operators have limited resources, the efficiency of maintenance and operations is particularly important. Maintenance processes and cemetery design should aim to create ongoing efficiencies—in the short and the long-term. Minimising unnecessary assets, focusing on high-use areas, avoiding over-servicing of low-use areas and reducing inefficient practices are all paramount.



#### Serviceable

Cemeteries are both generally publicly accessible, as well as places that have discrete operational needs. Creating and maintaining clear delineation between operational and public access areas is important for the safety of the public and efficiency for workers. Acknowledging that large service vehicles such as hearses frequent the area, and that onsite excavation/confined working conditions are present, are some key considerations.



#### Accessible

Clear and safe access for the public is important to all cemeteries. Those visiting can often be grieving and/or be of an older demographic. Design and maintenance of access arrangements therefore becomes all the more important. Access should meet appropriate inclusive access standards wherever possible. Enabling users to interact by leaving their cars and walking around the cemetery is encouraged.



#### Sustainable

There are many aspects to sustainability, including economic, social and ecological. Decisions about cemetery maintenance need to be considered in the context of long-term sustainable outcomes, including the choice of materials and facilities, their life-cycle and how the cemetery interacts with it surrounds. Choices made now will also affect perpetual maintenance needs across the long-term, alongside changing effects of climate change, such as water availability.



# Part 3—Maintenance themes

This section gives information on a range of themes that are typically relevant to the maintenance of cemeteries—both small and large. The aim of identifying these themes is to promote best practice across the range of maintenance issues while recognising how these apply to different scales of cemeteries throughout the state. The maintenance themes are summarised below, with numbering corresponding to following sections.

## 1 Site entry and access

Establishing a quality experience from the initial entry point of the cemetery, which is easily identifiable from the street, and ensures that key information is available and there is a sense of importance, history and belonging for those that use the facility

## 2 Cemetery grounds

Undertaking the range of practical maintenance activities required to keep cemeteries attractive, accessible and operational, such as basic mowing, trimming and minor improvements across the cemetery grounds

## 3 Monumentation

Managing monuments in a safe and effective way, recognising the inherent need to balance public safety and resourcing verses public interest, heritage and responsibilities for ongoing care

## 4 Environmental management

Ensuring that cemeteries work in conjunction with and balance the natural elements of the site, including integration of natural features, managing impacts from pests and weeds, and ensuring that people and property are safe from hazards including bushfire and flood

## 5 Built assets and infrastructure

Ensuring that maintenance of assets and infrastructure are considered from the outset, from site planning, to lifecycle design considerations and material selections, which are then considered in asset management, including maintenance and replacement needs

## 6 Maintenance skills and resources

Balancing the diverse resourcing needs of maintenance activities through the use of appropriately qualified staff, contractors and volunteers, including the availability of appropriate tools and ongoing development of staff that are necessary for operations to occur

## 7 Heritage values

Working with items of valuable heritage—as cemeteries typically do—from more recent to historical features, including those listed on local, state or national heritage registers and lists

## 8 Planning for maintenance

Planning ahead for required maintenance activities, while ensuring the responsive, flexible application of resources in ways that adapt to the changing demands and timelines that are inherent with cemetery activities

## 9 Providing public information

Providing for onsite information such as entry signage, historical or other interpretive signage, directional signage, through to more detailed online and data-driven information on those that are interred at the cemetery

## 10 Perpetual care

Considering long-term needs throughout the various lifecycle stages of use, from pre-planning and cemetery design, to active use stages, transitional and perpetual maintenance regimes

### 3.1 Site entry and access

Access into a cemetery is important to ensure effective use of the site for a range of user types, from those grieving, to interment services vehicles such as hearses, and for other maintenance tasks such as refuse collection. Site entry areas also need to cater to other access requirements, such as those of pedestrians and cyclists.

By using visual features such as trees, fencing and other entry markers, as well as keeping signs and entranceways consistent with their surroundings, cemetery entry areas can be a defining 'welcome zone', helping to establish the tone of the space from the outset and elevating the cemetery's importance in line with community values. The area also has the practical objective of being a clear marker for visitors to find the cemetery access point/s and to orientate themselves upon entry. As such, the site entry and access points are a high priority for maintenance attention.

As with all internal cemetery areas, access pathways, parking areas and associated facilities should always aim to achieve or exceed inclusive access standards. This means that steps should be avoided, ramps provided from parking areas to internal pathways, and barriers to vehicle access should not impede pedestrians (for example, by using bollards instead of fences). High accessibility is important, given the high use of cemeteries by the elderly, and the obligation to cater for others who are less mobile.



Image: Tumut Pioneer Cemetery

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Capitalise on the first opportunity to engage with users in a positive manner.

Seek to create a feeling of belonging to the space—a place where people want to be.

Establish a threshold to create an entry experience using gates, landscape, entry walls or signage. Use entry areas as a point to reduce vehicle speed and increase awareness.

Ensure consistent materials and plants are used to set cemetery character and presentation standards.



#### SAFE

Ensure entry areas are safe and practical to use, including being suitable for larger vehicles and avoiding conflict with pedestrians.

Establish a feeling of entering a safe place, with high levels of visual connection.

Encourage visitors, such as morning walkers, to use the site to create more passive surveillance and increase the feeling of safety.

Consider gating the entry to avoid after-hours access and illegal activity such as illegal headstone installation and vandalism.



#### EFFICIENT

Ensure signage clearly articulates the cemetery name and pertinent information (for example, opening hours and contact numbers).

Avoid overuse of regulatory signage, which can detract from the site entry experience. This signage may be consolidated as a separate element farther into the site.

At larger cemeteries, use clear directional signs to help users locate desired destinations.

At smaller cemeteries, provide simple cemetery plans to enable self-direction.



#### SERVICEABLE

Consider the needs of service vehicle access. Service vehicles are often longer and wider, requiring more turning space.

Clearly mark access restrictions for service or other vehicles, where appropriate.

Consider materials and infrastructure used at the site entry to avoid service vehicle damage and repair costs.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Maintain public access at least during daylight hours. Be consistent about these times.

Clearly indicate access times at the entry point.

Consider handrails and low ramp grades for less mobile users, and tactile paving for people with visual impairment.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Consider opportunities to use the site entry to establish native planting or other environmental initiatives.

Avoid excessive structures and landscape works that required significant ongoing maintenance and asset replacement costs.

Use local, low-maintenance materials and plants that require less water, and that complement any existing native habitat or corridors.

### Best-practice implementation

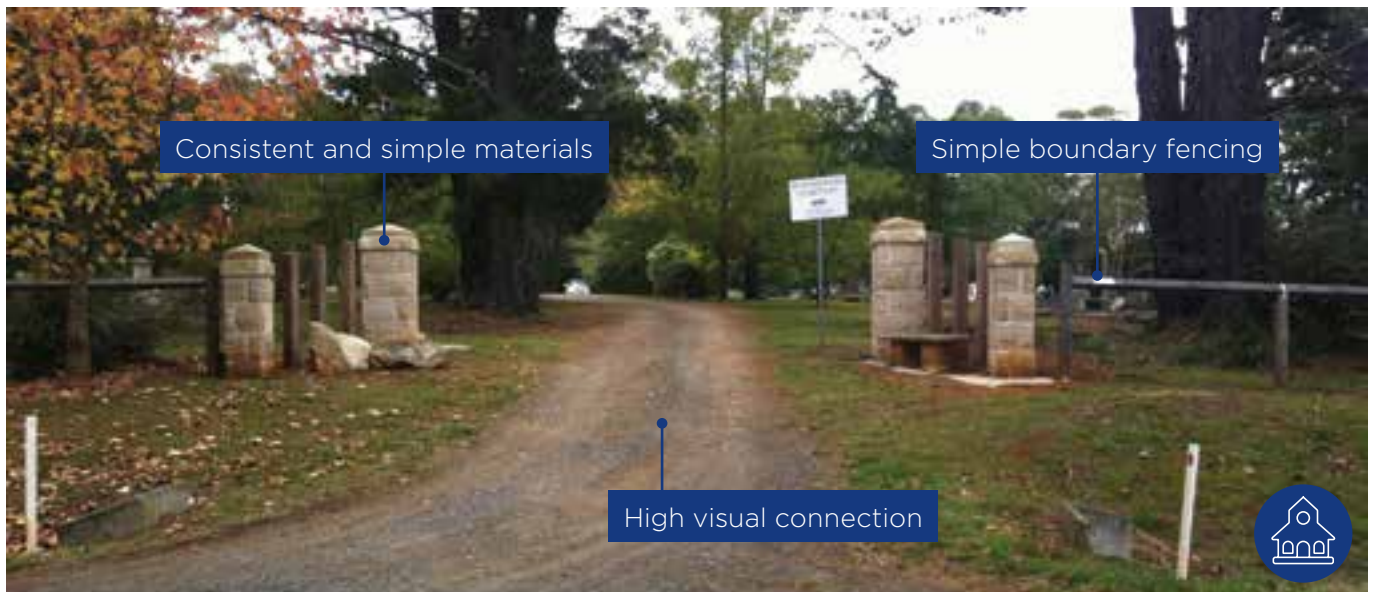
Providing clear and attractive access does not necessarily require large investments. Real-life examples include the Western Districts Memorial Park, which has an attractive timber fence and small garden with clear and definable signage (see Figure 3).

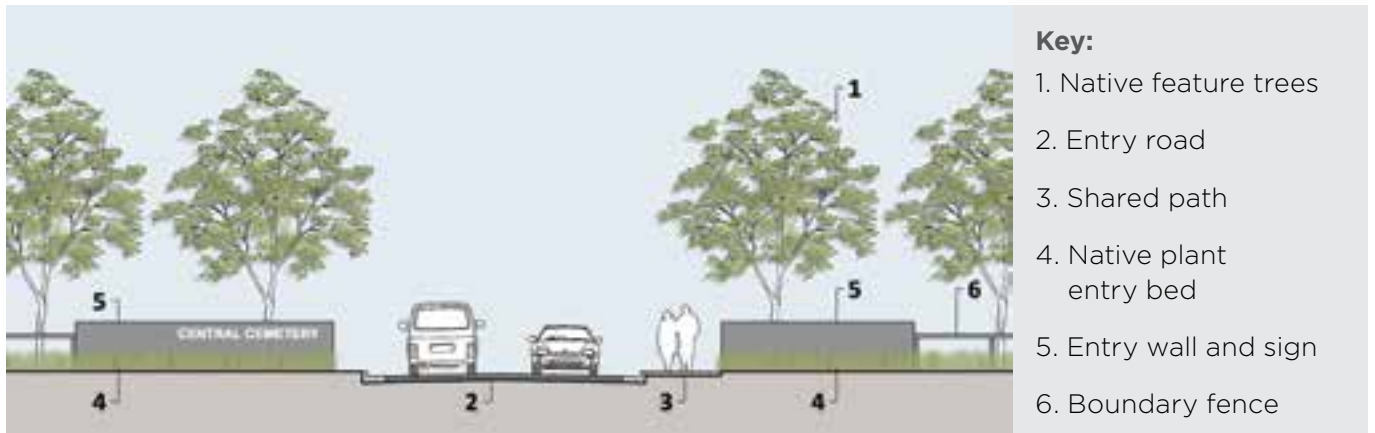
**Figure 3. Western Districts Memorial Park, Dubbo, Palmdale Group (a district cemetery)**



The smaller Bundanoon Cemetery uses local stone and timber elements and incorporates a seat. The entry adjoins a small timber/wire fence typical of smaller cemeteries (see Figure 4). This entry area was a community-based project undertaken with council’s consent, clear plans and an agreed implementation process.

**Figure 4. Bundanoon Cemetery, Bundanoon, Wingecarribee Shire Council (a local cemetery)**





**Figure 5. Typical entry elevation**

Simple plans can help develop entry features over time. Consider using simple materials/features such as trees in a more open setting. Materials should reflect the local area and broader setting, for example a small section of post and rail fence, with a cemetery sign and trees may be sufficient in a village or rural location.

Repeating the style and materials used at entry areas across several cemeteries can also help to create a sense of place across all facilities managed by the operator (for example, councils). A simple plan and perspective image of potential outcomes is shown at Figure 5.



**Key tips:**

- Use local, robust, low-maintenance and consistent materials
- Ensure road safety standards are being met
- Use a simple palette of materials

**Relevant legislation**

- Council’s construction design standards
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*
- AS 1428 (Parts 1-5): Design for access and mobility

**Relevant resources**

- Design for a Sense of Place—see Healthy Active by Design
- Local authority engineering design standards/signage policies
- Austroads Guide to Road Design— Particularly Parts 2 and 3

**Key organisations**

- Local authorities (councils)
- Austroads
- Healthy Active by Design

### 3.2 Cemetery grounds

The layout and style of cemeteries vary significantly according to age, history, location and usage. What is common across most cemeteries (though not all), is that whole or parts can be categorised into their overall lifecycle—from ‘unused’, ‘active’ and ‘transitional’ to their ‘perpetual’ or ‘forever’ phase.

With each phase comes different frequencies of use and community expectation. To that end, we recommend a hierarchical approach to the maintenance of individual cemetery grounds, or across a series of cemeteries, where possible. This allows operators to use resources in ways that best meet community expectations. A hierarchical approach may not apply to all cemeteries due to size or original design intent, but can generally be applied to most others.

Typical cemetery grounds maintenance activities include mowing, edging, weed control, refuse removal, topping-up of interment site subsidence and minor repairs, with these activities being undertaken more frequently in high-use areas, and less so in areas that are rarely used. Understanding how cemeteries are used is therefore important to this process.



Image: St Stephens Church, Newtown

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Ensure grounds maintenance activities consider high-use periods, for example, Mother's/Father's Day, Christmas and other religious holidays. Time grounds maintenance checks/activities in the days leading up to these periods.

Adopt a site-specific approach reflective of age and context—some cemeteries may have a more rustic appearance where pristine maintenance would be unnecessary.

Sensitively manage visitor mementos and offerings. Have a clear policy and apply it consistently. Where necessary, introduce new policies in new sections to differentiate from previous traditions.



#### SAFE

Ensure safe use of well-visited areas via regular maintenance, for example access roads, paths and avenues are more regularly mowed than low-use areas between graves.

Where required, apply 'Safer by Design' principles such as maintaining clear views and avoiding hidden pockets that may be unsafe. Clean tree trunks and low gardens can help establish a balance.

Where required, secure the perimeter at night with fencing/gates. Provide clear access/egress and consider CCTV where necessary.

Undertake regular inspections to ensure users are safe and secure.



#### EFFICIENT

Avoid overly detailed or manicured gardens or works that require constant attention.

Contain garden areas with appropriate edging to enable easy edge maintenance.

Trial preferred maintenance methods and consult a horticultural specialist where possible to facilitate long-term directions/solutions.



#### SERVICEABLE

Mow/trim according to seasonal needs, ensuring the site remains serviceable during high-growth periods.

Design internal roads/car park areas to minimise the need for regular maintenance by including effective drainage.

Speed limits should be displayed and parking areas clearly delineated to ensure easy access and avoid damage to other areas.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Identify high-use areas —these areas require greater maintenance levels to ensure accessibility for users.

Maintenance levels should ensure accessibility along key desire lines/pathways. Provide rest points.

High-use areas that are formal, such as memorialisation walls with dedicated pathways, should meet inclusive access standards, where possible.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Grounds maintenance can engage with natural processes to create greater integration with surrounds where appropriate.

Choice of landscape should be appropriate to the climate and the cemetery's layout and function.

Horticultural plantings and regime should be reflective of site history.

Remove tree saplings adjacent to monuments to prevent damage.

### Best-practice implementation

Mowing according to season is typical. However, frequency of mowing can be considered by frequency of use. Map high-, medium- and low-use areas based on cemetery lifecycle phase.

In low-use areas, consider low-maintenance and water-efficient, meadow-style treatments, for example trimming kangaroo grass biannually after flowering and cutting it to promote growth and seed-drop for effective regrowth. Mow high-traffic paths and access points more regularly. Trim or cut other areas every second or third mow, as undertaken at Rookwood Cemetery (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Rookwood Cemetery, Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Land Manager (a regional cemetery)**



In areas that are not currently used, consider using low-maintenance mulch. Reuse fallen or removed trees/branches on site, such as undertaken at Riverstone Cemetery (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Riverstone Cemetery, Blacktown City Council (a district cemetery)**





## Part 3—Maintenance themes

While a clear maintenance edge (for example lawn beam) is optimal, there will be a need to hand-mow around edges of some monuments. Protect kerbs, railings and edges and avoid using a whipper snipper around monuments, particularly sandstone ones (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Kemps Creek Cemetery, Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (a regional cemetery)**



### Key tips:

- Maintain areas according to visitation, focusing greatest efforts on areas of most use
- Design to minimise ongoing maintenance while reflecting character and sense of place—focus these on income-producing assets such as memorial gardens

### Relevant legislation

- *Cemetery and crematorium operator code of practice 2018—Part 8, Maintenance of facilities*
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*

### Relevant resources

- IPWEA Parks Management Suite incl. Practice Note 10.3: Levels of Service

### Key organisations

- Cemetery & Crematoria Association of NSW (CCANSW)
- IPWEA—Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia

### 3.3 Monumentation

Cemetery monuments often reflect the history, age and evolution of trends over time. These form a tangible link to the past and reflect fluctuating prosperity, as well as changing traditions in stone masonry and religion. Monuments are a significant part of the make-up of the cemetery and are often seen to be an inherent part of operator maintenance responsibility. However, as many operators know, the responsibility for maintenance of monuments often lies with the interment right holder.

As such, there are two key considerations associated with monumentation:

- Ensuring that there is a clear understanding of responsibility between operator and rights holder
- Ensuring monuments remain safe, considering the general public's interaction with them.

Operators have a responsibility to ensure that monuments are designed and installed to meet appropriate standards and policies—most notably *AS 4204:2019 Headstones and cemetery monuments* and *AS 4425:1996 Above ground burial structures*. Ensuring appropriate standards are met will mean longer-term safety and a reduced need for interference with cemetery monuments in the future. Once dealing with existing situations, the overarching principal (in line with the Burra Charter) is to 'do as much as necessary, but as little as possible' that may impact on the significance on existing monuments.



Image: Fred Hollows memorial and tombstone, Bourke Historic Cemetery

### Best-practice principles



#### SERVICEABLE

Consider monumental types and standards, and how these affect long-term grounds maintenance.

Where a new style is preferred, commence implementation in conjunction with new cemetery portions.

Ensure all monuments are designed and installed by a monumental mason who is authorised to undertake the work to the operator's standards.

Remove weeds and invasive vegetation by hand, via poison, or carefully trimming/mowing while avoiding damaged to the monument.



#### SAFE

Maintain clear policies on design and construction standards, including meeting AS 4204-2019 Headstones and cemetery monuments and AS 4425-1996 Above-ground burial structures.

Establish a methodical, risk-based approach to safety of existing monuments. Start with those in high-use areas under a structured and recurring program of review.

Maintain records and address risks according to greatest threats to life or property.



#### EFFICIENT

Develop a memorial register to identify monuments and record their condition over time.

Prioritise works according to risk, including contact with rights holders/families where possible, and public notifications processes such as public notices at the cemetery and advertising in local media.

Seek funding for necessary repair work from interment right holder or their beneficiaries/successors as relevant.

Have a clear safety policy consistent with heritage standards for the treatment of monuments where rights holders/families cannot be contacted.



#### WELCOMING

Embrace monuments as key elements of site stories and history.

Consider opportunities to create 'monument trails' of key sites and points of interest.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Use key avenues to access special monuments via a select trail system.

Ensure monuments do not detract from or result in pathways that are unsafe for general use.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Ensure systems are in place for long-term care and safety of monuments through clear and consistent standards and records.

Where possible, use sustainably sourced materials and avoid low-grade materials that may deteriorate more quickly.

### Best-practice implementation

Creating clear and consistent monumental requirements is important. This could include a transition from older style monuments to lawn beam monuments as new sections are created—see the Jilliby Cemetery as an example (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Jilliby Cemetery, Central Coast Council (a local cemetery)**



Avoid damage to monuments through careful maintenance within close surrounds. For example, avoid whipper snippers around monuments, remove vegetation within graves to avoid moisture retention, use non-toxic poisons around monument edges and hand-mow where possible. Wingecarribee Shire Council uses a provider of supported employment to people with disabilities to assist with these detailed tasks (see Figure 10; Image: Welby Garden Centre).

**Figure 10. Burradoo Cemetery, Wingecarribee Council/Welby Garden Centre (a local cemetery)**



## Part 3—Maintenance themes

Safety testing monuments should include extensive community engagement before, during and after implementation. Visually inspect monuments, hand test, and—only where necessary—undertake machine topple testing (to horizontal forces as per AS-4204:2019). Keep records and repeat at least every five years or as necessary. Where concerns exist, inform interment right holders and lay down monuments in accordance with National Trust Guidelines, but only if they pose an imminent risk (see Figure 11).



### Key tips:

- Design and construct for the long-term, to Australian Standards
- Take care around monuments to avoid damage
- Test monuments for stability and record outcomes for future comparison

**Figure 11. Monument safety demonstration, CCANSW Conference 2017 (Image: CCANSW)**



### Relevant legislation

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *Heritage Act 1977*
- AS-4204 (2019) Headstones and cemetery monuments/AS-4425 Above-ground burial structures

### Relevant resources

- National Trust, Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation 2009
- Guidelines for Floral and Ornamentation Policies, CCANSW

### Key organisations

- National Trust of Australia
- Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Land Manager
- Cemeteries & Crematoria Association of NSW (CCANSW)

### 3.4 Environmental management

There are a range of environmental management issues and situations that occur within cemeteries. From high-use, highly modified areas, to more integrated spaces that are more closely associated with their broader surrounds, there are many environmental opportunities and constraints to consider. For example, cemeteries can provide important habitat for native plants and animals or be exposed to pests and weeds that can damage both the cemetery and broader environment. Ground, surface and nearby water bodies should also be considered and steps taken to avoid negative effects.

Natural environments often give strong character and context to cemetery sites. They can provide beneficial settings such as for bushwalk memorial areas or as dedicated environmental offsets. While traditional rose gardens and introduced species are common to some cemeteries, their upkeep can be difficult in an Australian climate. They may be retained for heritage reasons, but would not generally be recommended in new situations. The effects of climate change and the consequences of more severe weather conditions also need to be considered, including the effect on horticultural needs.

Cemeteries also have an inherent need to disturb soils and consider sub-soil conditions. The burial process results in excess soils, or spoil, that must be moved from the burial plot. Soil conditions and the placement of spoil are important elements in the natural environment. Likewise, cemeteries can have significant remnant vegetation that needs to be retained for biodiversity purposes or which occupies unused portions of the cemetery. These areas can also carry risks, such as bushfire, while many cemeteries, or parts thereof, may also be exposed to flood waters. Balancing this wide range of environmental conditions within the context of the cemetery is therefore a key operational need.



Image: Rookwood, Sydney's oldest and largest working cemetery

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Integration of the natural environment helps to establish character and a sense of place.

Consider planting along boundaries to reinforce enclosure and backdrop where appropriate.

Avoid placing service areas at high-use locations, such as spoil stores within entry precincts.



#### SERVICEABLE

Retain native vegetation in ways that help establish character, but minimise potential damage to monuments and infrastructure, for example use of buffer planting of surrounds.

Seek to control pests and weeds through occasional intensive and coordinated efforts before effects become unmanageable.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Ensure natural environments do not negate accessibility needs—balance these through integrated design.

Where water-based facilities such as ponds or dams are used, minimise public access and ensure safety.



#### SAFE

Plan for safe access and evacuation during emergencies, such as bushfire and flood situations.

Avoid situations of conflict between users and nature, such as snakes, kangaroos and other fauna.

Where trees are retained in high-use areas, ensure regular tree assessment to avoid falling limbs causing damage or threatening life.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Promote the cemetery's environmental benefits. While practices such as natural burial may be in their infancy, there is growing recognition of sustainable practices.

Avoid fencing that reduces or cuts off the capacity for native fauna to move through the cemetery.

Consider water capture and re-use while also reducing water use by ending practices such as grave watering to speed up grave settling.



#### EFFICIENT

Where possible, ensure new landscape works avoid excessive reliance on water for upkeep—consider native options where available.

High-maintenance and presentation areas (for example, gardens) should correlate to high-use areas.

Consider existing environmental conditions when planning new areas.

### Best-practice implementation

The design of facilities should seek to balance the operational needs and existing context. Retain native vegetation connections where possible, integrating with site buffers or memorial walks (see Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Shoalhaven Memorial Gardens and Lawn Cemetery, Shoalhaven City Council (a regional cemetery)**



Undertake a safe and useful life expectancy (SULE) report for trees within the cemetery and repeat these at regular intervals to ensure ongoing retention of trees in safe places.

Use discrete locations for landscape supply storage and spoil stockpiles (see Castle Hill Cemetery at Figure 13). Avoid watercourse impacts and plan for bushfire and flood potential. Using strong buffer planting can also help define character and site enclosure. Target weeds through manual clearing, followed by mechanical/poison treatments where required (spot use only). Use a pesticide-use notification plan when undertaking chemical spraying.

**Figure 13. Castle Hill Cemetery, The Hills Shire (a district cemetery)**

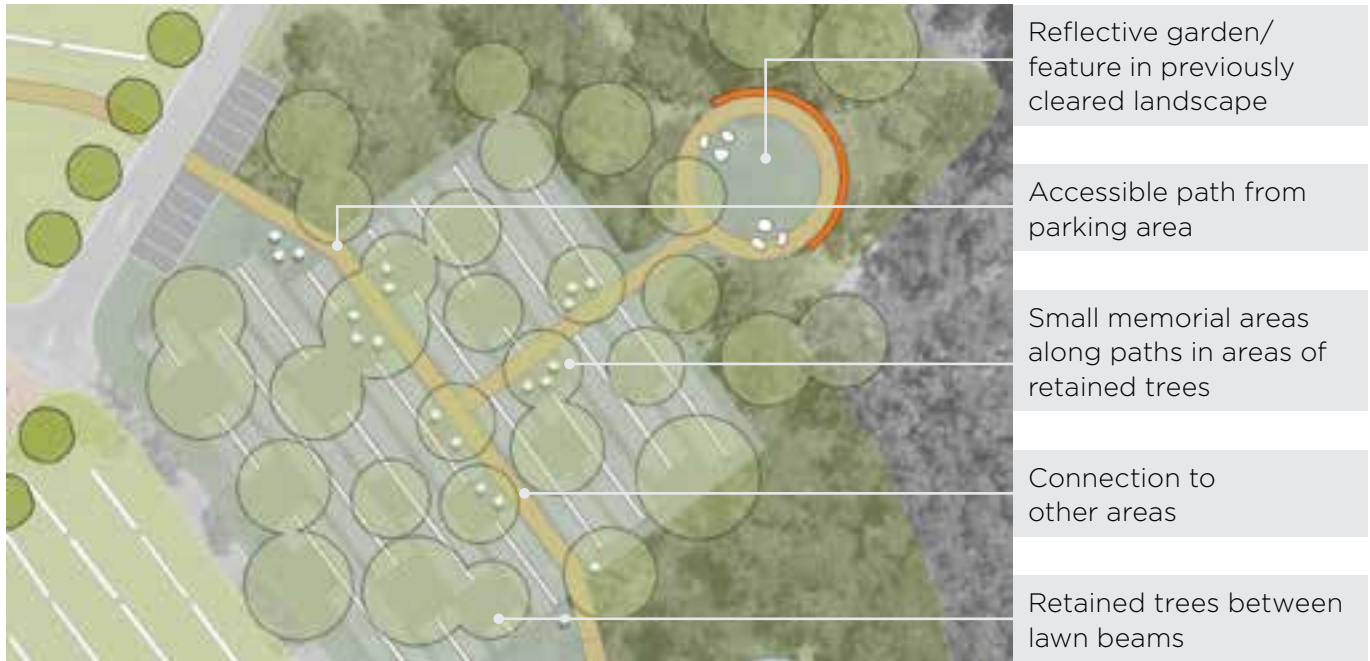




## Part 3—Maintenance themes

Plan to work in with key trees/environmental attributes. Consider a mix of burial and memorialisation areas and retaining those areas of greatest environmental value. How this could be undertaken in a conceptual way is shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14. Sample plan of new cemetery portion design within vegetated area**



### Key tips:

- Understand local attributes and enhance these where possible
- Ensure retained trees are safe and areas are accessible where needed
- Avoid landscape options that are at odds with native character

### Relevant legislation

- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*
- *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*
- *Biosecurity Act 2015*
- *Pesticides Act 1999*

### Relevant resources

- Flood Management Plans/ Studies
- Bushfire maps
- Guidelines for Water Safety in Urban Water Developments, Royal Life Saving Society

### Key organisations

- Local authorities (councils)
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment—Environment, Energy and Science /Environment Protection Authority
- State Emergency Services/ Rural Fire Services
- Local Land Services/ Landcare

### 3.5 Built assets and infrastructure

Apart from the monumentation elements of the cemetery, it can sometimes be easy to forget how many other assets and infrastructure are present. This could include fencing, signage, access roads, drainage and irrigation, as well as buildings, seats and shelters. Once the full range of assets is recognised, the monetary value of replacement can also be surprising.

Built assets and infrastructure should be captured in an asset management plan or similar document that can lead ongoing maintenance requirements and related liabilities, including when replacement of major infrastructure is likely to fall. Given the context of cemeteries and the unique equipment and assets they contain, it is preferable to have standalone plans rather than integrating these with other documents.

In recognising the value and maintenance/replacement needs of assets and infrastructure over time, operators have more onus to consider 'lifecycle costs'. This refers to the total cost of infrastructure beyond construction, but also includes regular maintenance, repair and eventually, replacement. An important consideration for operators is whether infrastructure adds value, and whether this value can be recouped to help meeting ongoing costs.

Local government operators also need to comply with requirements under the *Local Government Act 1993* and the associated Integrated Planning and Reporting framework, including the requirements of each council's resourcing strategy. Crown cemetery operators also have requirements under Part 5 of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* in the form of plans of management which should also consider these matters.



Image: Waverley cemetery, Bronte

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Use consistent materials and colours for assets where possible to create positive character and sense of place.

Ensure built assets, such as large roads or dominant buildings, do not detract from cemetery spaces.



#### SERVICEABLE

Balance aesthetics with ensuring that assets are easily serviced, for example using concrete, stone and hardwoods over other timbers and plastics.

As far as possible, ensure that assets can be maintained in-house or using typical trades/contractors—avoid specialised maintenance needs.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Avoid excessive provision of assets and infrastructure, reducing material use and increasing green space.

Consider perpetual maintenance needs when undertaking forward planning— consider opportunities to replace or reduce assets as cemetery phases change the form of plans of management, which should also consider these matters.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Infrastructure design should always aim to meet high access standards, including compliant parking areas, pathways and the like.

Consider the use of tactile pavers and hand rails at steep grades.

Consider site planning from the start— site key infrastructure on flat areas and within close proximity to avoid access issues.



#### SAFE

Use asset management plans to ensure that replacement needs are being considered and assets remain in safe and useful condition.

Wherever possible, immediately address acts of vandalism or graffiti to deter further occurrences.

Keep a log of maintenance safety tasks, ensuring the issues of personal safety are addressed as soon as possible (also refer Section 3.3).

Maintain fire protection systems and ensure that they comply with Australian Standards.



#### EFFICIENT

Consider lifecycle costs of assets to ensure costs of different options are considered over the long-term.

Consider multi-use assets and infrastructure to increase their use and value, for example shared roads/pathways, gardens/memorial areas.

Undertake regular maintenance audits to identify necessary works before failure— act as soon as possible to avoid larger requirements/costs.

## Part 3—Maintenance themes

### Best-practice implementation

Access to the gravesite is important for service vehicles, including for hearses and maintenance vehicles. These access points can become multi-use, such as ‘service only’ roads that are minimal width (for example, 3 m wide and operating as a one-way system), but also act as a walking path and/or, as shown in Figure 15 from Macquarie Park Cemetery, low volume drainage systems.

**Figure 15. Macquarie Park Cemetery, Northern Metropolitan Cemeteries Land Manager (a regional cemetery)**



Consider colour, signage and visual consistency. St Marys and Emu Plains General Cemeteries (Figure 16 and Figure 17) use Penrith Council’s corporate colours across all signage and assets to create a consistent look and feel.

This includes a more visually notable orange that is used to highlight facilities such as taps and refuse bins (Figure 17).

**Figure 16. St Mary’s and Emu Plains Cemeteries (a local cemetery)**



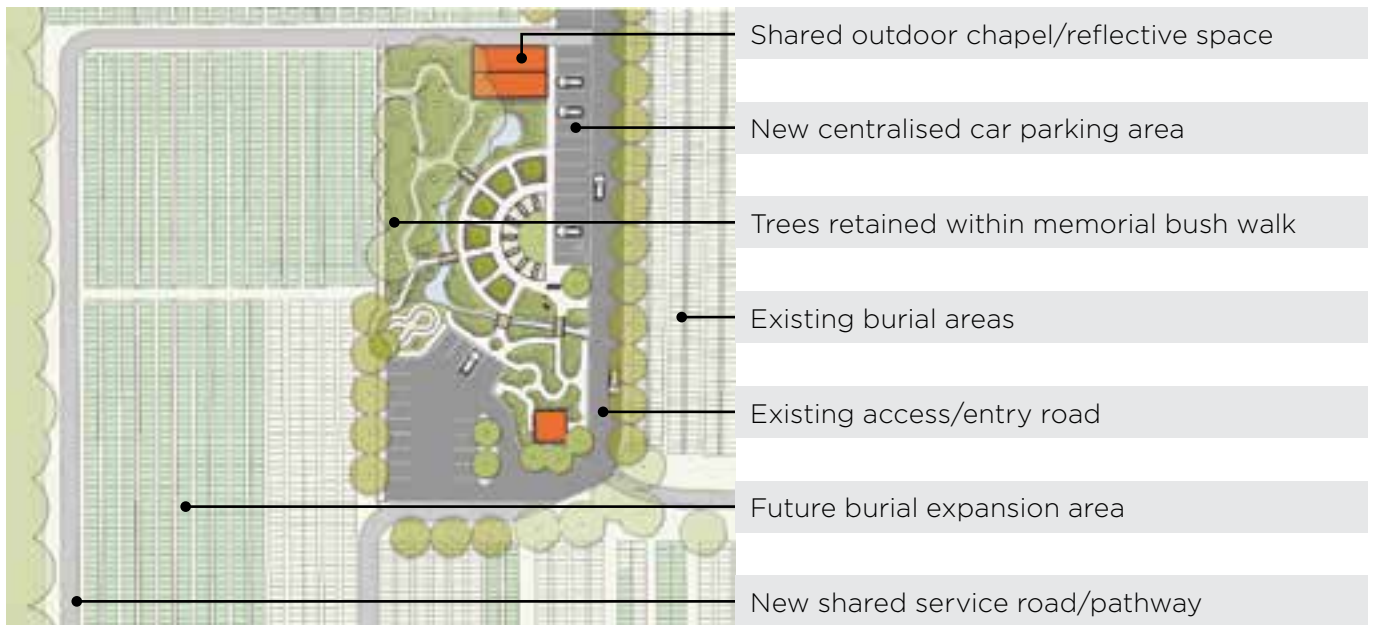
**Figure 17. Signage at St Marys and Emu Plains Cemeteries**



## Part 3—Maintenance themes

Where investigating cemetery expansion, consider options to integrate new assets that are multi-use and will remain in use over the long-term. For example, consider centralised parking areas and memorial gardens, and encourage opportunities for walking and contemplation, such as shared hearse access/walkways. An example of how this may be achieved in a conceptual way is shown in Figure 18.

**Figure 18. Sample plan of centralised and shared facilities**



### Key tips:

- Avoid excess assets and infrastructure that add to maintenance costs
- Seek consistency in asset type and character
- Maintain assets through an asset management plan that identifies maintenance/replacement needs

### Relevant legislation

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*
- State Environmental Planning Policy (*Infrastructure*) 2007
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Heritage Act 1977*

### Relevant resources

- IPWEA Practice Notes (e.g. Parks Management Suite incl. Practice Note 10.2: Parks Asset Management)
- Plan of Management Evaluation Framework, Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW

### Key organisations

- Office of Local Government
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA)
- Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW

### 3.6 Maintenance skills and resources

While cemetery maintenance often has a practical focus, the subtleties of quality cemetery maintenance can easily be lost, particularly for operators where the cemetery function is sometimes seen as a sub-set of broader parks and open spaces. To achieve sustained, quality maintenance a range of skills and resources are required.

Horticultural skills are of particular importance for cemetery maintenance. Having access to horticultural information is important to the planning, constructing and maintaining cemeteries over the long-term. This consistency is also important to capturing customer trust and their connection to being an 'owner' of part of the cemetery and having certain expectations of what they are purchasing or funding.

Those using the cemetery are often in a heightened state of grief, and understanding this process and being able to maintain facilities within this context is critical. Any field staff interacting with cemeteries should be trained in interaction with the bereaved.

Other training needs include those associated with the safe operation of machinery and associated situations, such as working in confined spaces, plant operator tickets and contractor management. There are also specialised cemetery training opportunities through organisations such as the Cemeteries & Crematoria Association of NSW, as well as vocational training organisations. Other more specific considerations may include training in cemetery-specific matters such as monumentation safety testing, crematorium operations and handling of the deceased.

Obtaining the right mix of skills and resources will, at times, require outside assistance. This may be in specialised advice for horticultural, heritage, or other professional services, or in the provision of more standardised services such as broad-acre mowing services. Balancing in-house work with these external services is often seen as the right mix for the variable environment of cemetery maintenance.

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Suspend maintenance work where inconvenience to funeral services may be caused, particularly to avoid noise impacts.

Value customer service, including office procedures/interactions and grave preparation.

Provide an avenue for customer feedback in relation to cemetery maintenance.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Understand options available at different cemeteries, ensuring the public has access to their preferred interment options where available.

Encourage public support through appropriate channels such as a 'Friends of the cemetery group', but always work to a plan and set clear boundaries. The cemetery operator is ultimately responsible for all legislative requirements.



#### EFFICIENT

Ensure staff/contractors understand the cemetery site and current operations and procedures, such as the current burial areas and key site features.

Ensure all staff have a good understanding of the cemetery service objectives, policies and procedures. Be consistent in application.



#### SERVICEABLE

Provide appropriate training to ensure effective maintenance methods are being applied and that they are consistent with cemetery policies, for example preventing damage to memorials and handling of items left on graves.

Apply horticultural knowledge to all floral grounds activities to facilitate long-term maintenance needs.



#### SAFE

Make safety a cornerstone of all operations to ensure staff and cemetery visitors are secure.

Ensure all operational staff have a strong understanding of workplace health and safety requirements.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Use horticultural knowledge to create more sustainable outcomes in terms of both costs and environment.

Encourage and engage with assistance from groups such as Landcare where available. Seek advice, develop plans and facilitate their ongoing assistance.

### Best-practice implementation

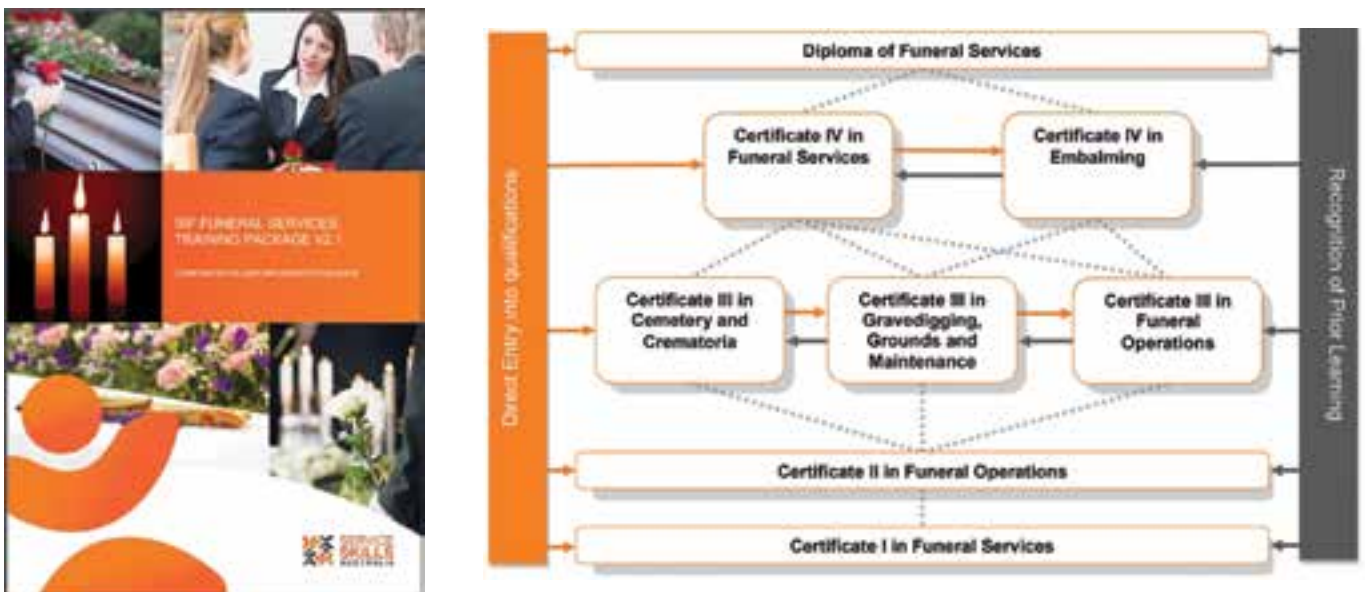
The Cemeteries & Crematoria Association of NSW has undertaken two-day training courses aimed at promoting safe working practices in cemeteries. This practical course covers a range of topics from grave preparation, dealing with grief, to health and safety procedures (see Figure 19). Such courses provide hands-on experience for cemetery staff and their training needs.

Figure 19. Cemetery safety training demonstration, CCANSW Conference 2017 (Image: CCANSW)



Other training providers include various vocational and tertiary educators. The sector has nationally endorsed competency standards, as set out within the *Funeral Services Training Package* document (see Figure 20). This provides a helpful reference as to the type of courses available and the relevant information to search for.

Figure 20. Funeral services training package document





## Part 3—Maintenance themes

To suit the dynamic environment of cemeteries, ensure suitable materials and equipment are available for tasks to be undertaken by staff. With the nature of the cemetery works being unknown until one or two days beforehand, it is important that equipment is available to suit modified schedules. Being responsive to customer needs is critical to the bereavement process (see equipment example at Figure 21).

**Figure 21. Machinery and equipment displays, CCANSW Conference 2019**



### Key tips:

- Ensure appropriate horticultural skills are used in site planning and maintenance
- Provide training to all staff on grief/bereavement
- Ensure all appropriate training or equipment is available for maintenance purposes

### Relevant legislation

- *Cemetery and crematorium operator code of practice 2018*, Part 4, Professional conduct

### Relevant resources

- SIF Funeral Services Training Package Companion Volume – Implementation Guide

### Key organisations

- Australian Centre for Grief & Bereavement
- Cemeteries & Crematoria Association of NSW (CCANSW)
- Deakin University/ Vocational training organisations

### 3.7 Heritage values

To varying degrees, all cemeteries hold a significant element of a locality's social, cultural and historical landscape. This is formally recognised by many cemeteries being listed as having local significance (identified by the local council's Local Environmental Plan), state significance (being on the State Heritage Register) and national significance (Commonwealth/National Heritage List).

The National Trust of Australia (New South Wales) has, in association with the then NSW Department of Planning, developed specific cemetery heritage guidelines under *the Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation* document. This provides thorough advice on heritage matters and supports the broader Burra Charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance.

The *Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation* highlight the broad range of heritage values, including historical, social, religious, genealogical, artistic, setting, landscape, botanical, ecological and human. Any operator that offers renewable interment rights must establish a Heritage Advisory Committee under Section 69 of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and Clause 16 of the associated Regulations. An industry guide to Heritage Advisory Committees has also been published under Section 69(3) of the Act.

Wherever possible, the heritage and history of the site should be both respected and celebrated in ways that are complementary to its values, whether through monuments, buildings, landscape features or setting. At times, this may require specialised input and opportunities for operators to partner with others in restoration or conservation works. Options may also be available to seek additional funding from grant programs or similar through organisations such as the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Heritage Council of NSW. Establishing formal heritage documents such as a conservation management plan can also help in setting out the particular needs of a heritage site.



Image: Silverton cemetery

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Use heritage elements to create a connection between the cemetery grounds and visitors to the site.

Consider opportunities to co-ordinate improvements with existing heritage elements to create a stronger sense of place.



#### SAFE

Retain heritage elements, but in ways that are safe for visitors to interact with.

Where heritage elements are unsafe, follow the *Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation* developed by the National Trust of Australia (NSW).



#### EFFICIENT

Consider funding options for the completion of heritage works and for establishing heritage information.

Consider the preparation of a conservation management plan or seek similar advice to guide heritage works.



#### SERVICEABLE

Develop actions and seek commitment of resources to meet standards of maintenance/repair.

Consider options to enable restoration and preservation works to be undertaken outside of standard operational activities.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Interest in heritage values, site history and those interred is growing. Use these to engage more people with the cemetery, including through site signage and online access.

Where particularly important, consider providing accessible paths to key historical elements of the site.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Prioritise heritage activities over time, creating a more consistent, long-term effort.

Where available, ensure that heritage works are consistent with professional advice or seek such advice where necessary.

### Best-practice implementation

Engaging pro-actively with history creates a positive experience and desire to visit and interact with cemetery grounds. Northern Beaches Council have developed an Online Cemetery Walking Tour of Mona Vale Cemetery (see Figure 22).

**Figure 22. Mona Vale Cemetery online tour, Northern Beaches Council (district cemetery)**



There are also several ways that historical elements of sites can be celebrated. Specific elements of architecture, historical use and monumental design can all be highlighted. For example, the ‘grave digger’s hut’ at Rookwood Cemetery received funding for conservation and restoration works (see Figure 23).

**Figure 23. Grave Digger’s Hut restoration project before and after (regional cemetery; images: RGCRLM)**



## Part 3—Maintenance themes

Particular attention should be paid to maintenance and other activities where the cemetery is listed on the State Heritage Register. Under Section 60 of the *Heritage Act 1977*, carrying out any development, altering any building or removing any tree or other vegetation requires the approval of the Heritage Council of NSW. Having clear guidance in the form of a conservation management plan would always be preferable in these circumstances.



### Key tips:

- Work with heritage information to engage with cemetery users
- Consider options to improve and highlight heritage elements, including through grants
- Be prepared with heritage information to support works

### Relevant legislation

- *Heritage Act 1977*
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and Regulation 2014

### Relevant resources

- NSW State Heritage Inventory
- Local Planning Controls
- Plans of Management
- Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter
- Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation, National Trust of Australia (NSW)
- Guide to heritage advisory committees, CCNSW

### Key organisations

- Heritage NSW
- Heritage Council of NSW
- National Trust
- International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)
- Local authorities (councils)
- Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW

### 3.8 Planning for maintenance

As there are a broader range of cemetery maintenance tasks to consider, it is preferable that plans be in place to identify how these will be achieved. This form of planning will help to define the cemetery maintenance needs, the resources necessary for maintenance and where these can be obtained.

Three key components should be considered:

- **an overarching component that identifies the overall intent and service standard to be achieved** for each cemetery under the control of the operator. This should include recognition of the frequency of use, style of cemetery and community expectations
- **an annual plan (month by month) to achieve the overall standards** and considering occasional and seasonal needs. During high-growth periods, maintenance tasks are more orientated to grounds maintenance activities, with annualised or occasional maintenance being programmed for low-growth periods. Capture specific horticultural needs such as pruning, mulching and sowing
- **weekly and daily plans**, which identify more specific responsibilities of maintenance activities and how these may occur with consideration of interment or other on-site activities. Maintain records of when and what maintenance has been completed

Critical to all cemetery maintenance is to forward plan for maintenance requirements, but to also ensure that maintenance can be applied flexibly. Cemetery activity is changeable from day to day and week to week. Within the context of the importance of interment activities that may be occurring on site, maintenance may need to be delayed or modified to suit. Having this flexible approach will ensure that not only are cemeteries well maintained and presented, but operational activities have minimal effect on visitors.



Image: Robertson Cemetery

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Keep the cemetery looking well maintained by ensuring basic tasks like rubbish removal are attended to.

Provide standard plastic vases, remove dead flowers and replace empty vases to collection points.

Consider community expectations, for example through surveys, focus groups and targeted consultations.

Sensitively manage visitor mementos and offerings. Have a clear policy and apply it consistently.



#### SAFE

Remove dead branches/fallen trees regularly to ensure safe and easy access.

Plan for maintenance of assets to ensure their safe use, including regular inspection and remediation of identified/reported issue.

Ensure vegetation, particularly trees, is maintained safely, using regular arborist reporting and pre-emptive works.



#### EFFICIENT

Ensure contractors or maintenance staff are aware of services/onsite activities to enable flexibility in maintenance schedules.

Where possible, use the same staff for maintenance over time, with appropriate training/understanding of the unique cemetery context.

Have clear and consistent processes for maintenance works and monitor effectiveness over time.



#### SERVICEABLE

Maintain comprehensive asset information and service assets in a pre-emptive not reactive way.

Consider seasonal conditions, for example dry versus wet periods and vary maintenance accordingly.

Program maintenance at known slower days/times of the week to avoid conflict with services.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Ensure maintenance of facilities allows for ongoing access to sites, especially key access paths and desire lines.

Consider signage that explains maintenance regimes for vegetation or grounds generally, or current maintenance signs when maintenance is occurring.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Recognise the differentiation in maintenance requirements by season and work with these to benefit the cemetery (for example, pruning or planting periods).

Keep abreast of latest best practice standards and equipment in relation to more efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable maintenance techniques.

### Best-practice implementation

Shoalhaven City Council has developed a comprehensive set of plans for the care of their 13 cemeteries (for example, Figure 24). This includes monthly maintenance cycle schedules, weekly plans and daily ‘toolbox’ meetings to enable a flexible approach. General requirements for all staff are clearly explained, providing comprehensive information for new staff.

**Figure 24. Berry General Cemetery, Shoalhaven City Council (a local cemetery)**





## Part 3—Maintenance themes

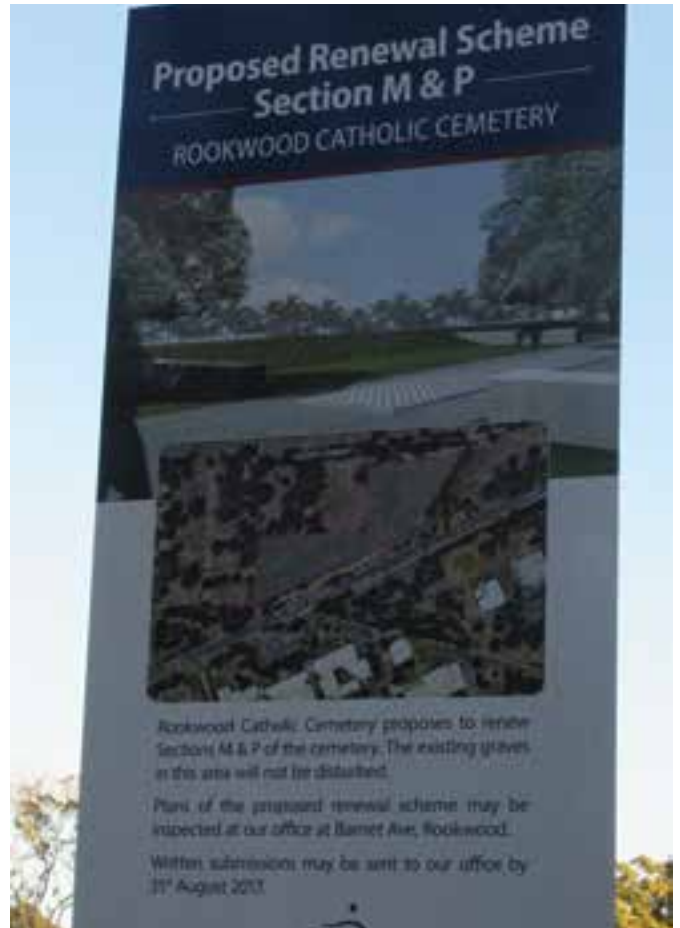
Several larger cemetery operators also provide leadership in the delivery of maintenance tasks. Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Land Manager has provided several demonstrations relating to the monument safety (Figure 25). Staying up to date with the latest technology and practices via industry forums and through connections to larger operator knowledge is important for smaller operators within the industry.

Communicating major maintenance or upgrade activities is also important (such as works at Rookwood Cemetery—see Figure 26). Many cemeteries undergo upgrade programs and articulating how and why these are being undertaken can create positive community support. Poor communication can have the opposite effect.

**Figure 25. Cemetery safety training demonstration, CCANSW Conference 2019**



**Figure 26. Communicating cemetery maintenance plans, Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria**





### Key tips:

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- Plan ahead, from daily, weekly and monthly schedules
- Apply maintenance regimes flexibly
- Stay informed through industry participation

### Relevant legislation

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- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*

### Relevant resources

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- Cemeteries & Crematoria Association of NSW/ International Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association —Various resources
- IPWEA Practice Notes (for example, Parks Management Suite incl. Practice Note 10.3: Parks Management: Levels of Service and 10.5: Planning)

### Key organisations

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- Cemeteries & Crematoria Association of NSW (CCANSW)
- International Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association (ICCFA)
- Office of Local Government
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA)

### 3.9 Providing public information

In addition to their primary function of interment, cemeteries are typically a significant source of information on the history of post-European settlement within an area. Genealogy enquiries are common, particularly details of plot locations and personal information contained in cemetery registers.

Encouraging greater public interaction and knowledge of cemeteries is recognised as an important aspect of cemetery operations. Maintaining and making information available is an important aspect of this function. Opportunities to do this include:

- providing onsite information, including interpretive signage regarding the cemetery's history, as well as other site information such as environmental or geographic attributes
- recognising the importance of historical information for ancestry purposes, including the capture/recording of such information in ways that the public or historical groups can use readily
- considering how and when people can access information, including at the cemetery, online and through emerging technologies.

There is a range of other information that is relevant to the public, such as operator contact information, cemetery site rules and regulations, fees/charges and cemetery opening hours. Ensure that site users have all the information they need, but avoid confusing them or creating cluttered signage.

Cemetery operators are also required to maintain a register of interment rights, memorials, cremations and interments. The register must be available to the public (on request and subject to privacy considerations). For cremations, operators must keep all related applications, certificates, permits and other documents for at least 15 years. 'Publicly accessible' does not mean all information in the register is available. Basic information may be readily available, with more detailed personal information being restricted and safeguards in place to limit access.

### Best-practice principles



#### WELCOMING

Provide necessary information at arrival. Consider a simple cemetery map and key information at a safe location once inside the cemetery.

Detailed regulatory information should not dominate entry points—this can create confusion and be perceived as a negative experience.

Provide up-to-date information on events including memorial services, ANZAC Day and other commemorations.



#### ACCESSIBLE

Ensure basic information is available onsite, including section and row signage that enables visitors to locate individual plots.

Capture individual plot information in ways that enable genealogical searches via online services and mobile phone apps.

At the cemetery, provide information for accessing online/mobile searches on fixed signage.



#### EFFICIENT

With increasing use of smart phone technology, genealogical and site information should be online and mobile-friendly wherever possible.

Signage should be easily visible from either the road or by pedestrians. – Ensure text and images are appropriately sized to enable interpretation.



#### SERVICEABLE

Signage should be designed and constructed to ensure ease of maintenance.

Signage should comply, as applicable, with SEPP No 64—Advertising and Signage.



#### SAFE

Provide onsite information/signage on infrastructure/ground works, including any temporary access restrictions that may be in place.

Consider orientation and location of signage to enable users to safely stop and read without danger.



#### SUSTAINABLE

Provide information about sustainability initiatives/ecological features via onsite interpretative signage.

### Best-practice implementation

Promotion of cemetery activities and community interaction can help establish a stronger connection to available facilities and increase the appreciation of the importance of cemeteries. Through activities such as 'Death Cafes', associated with Dying to Know Day/Dying to Talk, operators can facilitate strong community understanding of death and grieving and provide information on cemetery options (see Figure 27).

**Figure 27. Dying to Know Day/Dying to Talk promotions (Images: GroundSwell Project/Palliative Care Australia)**



Access to information via online and smart phone applications is becoming more and more valuable to communities. The City of Blue Mountains online cemetery register provides a map-based search tool that can be used on a smart phone or online (see Figure 28). The facility makes information available down to individual plot level.

**Figure 28. Online cemetery search portal, Springwood Cemetery, Blue Mountains City Council (local cemetery)**



## Part 3—Maintenance themes

At the entry to the Macquarie Park Cemetery, colour-coded lines direct visitors to cemetery facilities, reducing the need for additional, intrusive signage (see Figure 29).

**Figure 29. Signage and road markings at Macquarie Park Cemetery, Northern Metropolitan Cemeteries Land Manager (regional cemetery)**



### Key tips:

- Create ease of use for visitors through clear and accurate signage
- Increase access to information where possible, particularly through online technologies
- Connect with communities through events and activities

<b>Relevant legislation</b>	<b>Relevant resources</b>	<b>Key organisations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013</i></li><li>• <i>Public Health Act 2010</i></li><li>• <i>Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)</i></li><li>• <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*</i></li><li>• <i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cemetery and crematorium operator code of practice 2018, Part 6—Provision of information and disclosure</li><li>• State Environmental Planning Policy No 64—Advertising and Signage</li><li>• CCNSW Guide for a cemetery operator's register</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cemeteries &amp; Crematoria NSW</li><li>• The GroundSwell Project Inc.—Dying to Know Day</li><li>• Palliative Care Australia—Dying to Talk</li></ul>
<p>*These apply to public sector operators only</p>		

### 3.10 Perpetual care

From a maintenance perspective, perpetual care requires ongoing consideration of long-term community needs for cemetery planning, as well as through the lifecycle stages of the cemetery. At the planning phase, operators need to consider carefully the full extent of area that can be used for cemetery purposes, including the potential number of interments that can be catered for over the life of the cemetery.

During the 'active' phase, perpetual care funds should be accumulated to cater for the majority of perpetual needs. As the cemetery enters the 'transitional' phase, operators need to consider reducing long-term liabilities before entering the 'perpetual' or 'forever' phase, where limited revenue is generated, but there is still likely to be a level of public access and activity. Management of these funds differ between the public sector and other operators, and operators should consider these requirements accordingly.

Perpetual costs will differ depending on the decisions made during planning, active and transitional phases of the cemetery—all are important. Key considerations include:

- balancing lifecycle cost of assets with community needs and aesthetic appeal by minimising long-term maintenance, repair and replacement, while meeting operational and community objectives
- where possible, providing a range of services and associated costs to provide options for a range of community needs while continuing to cover costs of perpetual care.

Perpetual funds raised can reasonably be used for cemetery expansion, provided that long-term plans and associated costs are being considered/allowed for at the point at which the cemetery reaches its perpetual or forever phase. Once the cemetery enters a perpetual phase, and where visitation is correspondingly low, a less active maintenance regime may be appropriate, for example by establishing a 'meadow effect' that allows native grasses or flowers to establish over longer periods between mowing. While a reduction in service standards may be appropriate, even more attractive at times, it should not detract from people being able to visit the cemetery. There may also be a need to adjust outcomes over consecutive periods when transitioning from more regular maintenance processes.

### Best-practice principles



#### ACCESSIBLE

Retain public access where possible to cemeteries in their perpetual phase.

Where necessary, consider restricted access areas and encouraging access along dedicated paths to allow maintenance to focus on these higher use areas.



#### WELCOMING

Ensure that care of cemeteries allows them to remain welcoming beyond the period of active use.

Continue to prioritise higher use areas such as entries to create a welcoming space, even in perpetuity.



#### SAFE

Ensure that sufficient funds have been set aside to ensure that cemeteries remain safe for visitation.

Maintain safety checks of monuments at regular intervals, using a risk-based approach.



#### SERVICEABLE

Ensure that maintenance regimes maintain a level of serviceability, considering appropriate equipment and resourcing needs over time.

Plan for a staged transition, allowing maintenance regimes to evolve between active and perpetual stages.

Ensure heritage needs have been considered and funds are available to maintain heritage values (refer also to Sections 3.3 and 3.7).



#### SUSTAINABLE

Adjust maintenance needs where possible to match available funds, and consider alternative funding sources to supplement if required.

In areas without burials, consider opportunities for native regeneration to reduce active maintenance and increase ecological quality.



#### EFFICIENT

Consider perpetual needs at all stages of the cemetery lifecycle, including planning, active and transitional stages.

Ensure the period leading up to the cessation of interments allows for the efficient transition. For example, reduce the number of reservations, enable rights transfers and reduce asset liabilities over time.



## Part 3—Maintenance themes

### Best-practice implementation

The earlier that perpetual care requirements are recognised, the easier it is to accumulate funds for these needs. There are four key components that are needed:

1. **Long-term site plans** to determine the extent of infrastructure works and the number of remaining interments—a master plan (see Figure 30)
2. **An asset plan** that identifies the timing and costs of capital works, major upgrades and replacement needs over the long-term
3. **Strategic business plans** to identify potential trends and costs of cemetery services, including the costs of these into the future
4. **A financial model** that provides for the apportionment of costs for current services, as well as for perpetual costs over the long-term—a long-term financial plan.

Figure 30. Typical cemetery master plan, Penrith City Council



## Part 3—Maintenance themes

With these components in place, and with effective monitoring and adjustment over time, we suggest accumulating funds within a restricted or separate trust account.

Recognise that one size does not fit all. Cemeteries have different maintenance needs, even within the same area—such as the case with Dubbo Regional Council cemeteries (see Figure 31 and Figure 32).

**Figure 31. Wongarbron Cemetery, Dubbo Regional Council (a local cemetery)**



**Figure 32. Wellington Cemetery, Dubbo Regional Council (a district cemetery)**





### Key tips:

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- Plan ahead for perpetuity
- Start accumulating funds as early as possible
- Monitor funds and cemetery take-up and adjust fees accordingly

### Relevant legislation

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- *Cemetery and crematorium operator code of practice 2018*, Part 8—Maintenance of facilities, graves, vaults, cemeteries and crematoria

### Relevant resources

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- Manual for Victorian Cemetery Trusts, 2017

### Key organisations

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- Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW

# Glossary

This glossary explains some commonly used terms related to this Cemetery Maintenance Guide, the interment industry, and the operation of cemeteries and crematoria more generally. Where applicable, definitions are aligned with the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*.

**Active cemetery area/Active phase**—is one of the three phases to the cemetery maintenance lifecycle. An active cemetery area refers to part or all of the cemetery where interment activities regularly occur, and therefore have higher levels of visitation. Other lifecycle stages include ‘transitional’ and ‘perpetual’, which are also defined here.

**Burial**—refers to placing a casket, coffin or container holding human remains into an earth grave (also known as interment), or a natural burial or ‘out-of-coffin’ burial, which may use only a shroud.

**Cemetery operator**—refers to the providers of interment services such as burials and cremations. Three primary sectors provide cemetery and crematorium services in NSW: the Crown sector, the local government sector and the private sector. A smaller fourth sector is the community sector. Cemetery operators are part of the ‘interment industry’.

**Cemetery operator’s register**—is the register kept by a cemetery operator that records interment rights granted, memorials erected, each interment carried out and each cremation carried out. The register is kept under Section 63(1) of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*.

**Coffin or Casket**—is a container to hold whole body remains:

- a coffin is tapered at the head and foot and wide at the shoulders
- a casket is rectangular in shape and is usually constructed of better-quality timbers.

**Columbarium**—is a structure with niches (small spaces) for the placement of urns or other approved containers used for cremated remains. A columbarium may be outdoors or part of a mausoleum.

**Crown reserves**—are lands set aside on behalf of the community for a range of public purposes. Many, though not all, cemeteries are located on Crown reserves.

**Crown land manager**—is a legal body that cares for a Crown reserve on behalf of the people of NSW. This may include a cemetery on a Crown reserve.

**Crypt**—is a space in a mausoleum or other building to hold cremated or whole human remains.

**Grave**—is the site in the cemetery where the coffin or casket containing the deceased will be, or has been placed.

**Interment industry**—is defined under Section 26 the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* as meaning any of the following:

- a) cemetery operators
- b) funeral directors
- c) funeral funds within the meaning of the *Funeral Funds Act 1979*
- d) any other persons, or persons of a class, prescribed by the Regulations.

## Glossary

**Interment of human remains**—is defined under Section 44 the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* as meaning the:

- a) placement of human remains in a mausoleum, vault, columbarium or other structure designed for the placement of such remains, or
- b) burial in the earth of human remains (directly in the earth or in a container).

**Interment right**—is defined as a right that is granted under Section 44 the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*. This is as a contract between a cemetery operator and a right holder permitting the right holder to have human remains buried in a particular location in a cemetery.

**Interment right holder**—is defined under Section 44 the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and means the person recorded in the cemetery operator's register in relation to that cemetery as the holder of the interment right.

**Interment site**—is defined under Section 44 the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and means a place in a cemetery for the interment of human remains.

**Lawn cemetery**—is a burial ground with commemorative plaques set into the lawn. There is no kerbing or pathways and usually no grave plantings.

**Mausoleum**—is a building in which human remains are interred (placed).

**Memorial**—means:

- a) a gravestone, plaque, cenotaph or other monument, or
- b) any other structure or permanent physical object used to memorialise a deceased person.

**Memorial garden**—is a rose or planted garden for placing cremated ashes.

**Memorial service**—refers to a ceremony commemorating the deceased without the body present.

**Niche**—is a space in a columbarium, mausoleum or niche wall to hold cremated remains.

**Non-traditional cemetery users**—are users that are not associated with the interment industry and are visiting the cemetery other reasons, such as tours, heritage information or use as passive open space.

**Perpetual cemetery area/Perpetual phase**—is one of the three phases to the cemetery maintenance lifecycle. A perpetual cemetery area refers to part or all of the cemetery where interment activities rarely occur, and as such have typically low levels of visitation and activity. Other lifecycle stages include 'active' and 'transitional', which are also defined here.

**Perpetual interment right**—is defined by the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and allows human remains to be buried and left undisturbed forever.

**Renewable interment right**—is defined by the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and allows human remains to be buried for a limited time. The initial period for non-cremated remains must be at least 25 years. At the end of the initial period, the interment right may be renewed, for at least five years. A renewable right can only be held up to a total of 99 years.

**Traditional cemetery users**—are users that are associated with the interment industry, such as funeral directors and cemetery maintenance staff, and the bereaved that are visiting family or friends that have been interred or memorialised within the cemetery.

## Glossary

**Transitional cemetery area/Transitional phase**—is one of the three phases to the cemetery maintenance lifecycle. A transitional cemetery area refers to part or all of the cemetery where there are occasional interment activities, such as second interments and interment via a pre-existing interment right, and as such have some visitation, though not as much as an ‘active’ cemetery area would. Other lifecycle stages include ‘active’ and perpetual’, which are also defined here.

**Vault**—is a small building or chamber (normally of brick, concrete or tiles) for burial, usually partly or wholly underground.





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