

# S355 Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting

20 February 2018



## Minutes

HELD AT **Bega Valley Commemorative Civic Centre**

### Present

Cr Jo Dodds	Michael Pryke	Barbara Grant
Peter Phillips	Jackie Miles	Nancy Grant
Anne Greenaway	Gary Scott-Holland (BVSC Manager Community & Cultural Assets)	Karen Terwin (BVSC Cemetery & Hall Officer)
Jackie Grant (BVSC Cemetery & Hall Assistant),		

### Apologies

Michelle Preo (BVSC Property and Facilities Coordinator), Darragh Reynolds, Fiona Firth.

Tex Pena – Resigned due to moving interstate.

### 1. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes from 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017 Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting were taken as read -

Moved – **Michael Pryke**                      Seconded – **Peter Phillips**

### 2. Introductions

Gary Scott-Holland – BVSC Manager of Community & Cultural Assets.

### 3. Business Arising

#### 3.1 Action Items from the previous meeting

**ACTION – BVSC to seek external quotes on works at Bega Cemetery.**

We have liaised with Council’s civil construction engineer team; a decision was made for them to seek some quotes on our behalf. We will report back once we have some quotes.

**ACTION – BVSC to forward burial statistics to committee.**

COMPLETE.

**ACTION – BVSC to contact heritage advisor regarding gates.**

Council’s Heritage Advisor does not see an issue with moving one of the posts slightly to the side this will allow greater access for trucks etc. Jackie has organised a quote through Sapphire Monuments & Granite - \$2990.00 + GST. We will accept this quote and continue to liaise with the heritage team during the works.

Q. Would it be worthwhile looking into a grant for this?

No, it wouldn't be worth it for amounts less than \$5000.

**ACTION – BVSC to follow up work with engineer – Tantawangalo Cemetery.**

Council had confirmation the church and grounds have been sold via auction on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018. We have been in contact with the new owners, they have agreed to let us use the current access to the cemetery in the short term.

Council's civil construction team are getting quotes together for the access road, full plans have been drawn up.

The cemetery is still operational, there are a number of reserves in the cemetery and more space to be utilised if required.

Q. Will the environmental factors be taken into consideration?

A. We will discuss this with the construction team as there are a number of trees that will need to be removed from the site.

**ACTION: BVSC to ensure contractors are aware of environmental factors.**

Q - Crosses on new graves – some new graves have crosses on them and some do not making it difficult, at times, to identify who is buried where. The crosses are an extra cost applied by the Funeral Director; families are not obliged to have a cross if they chose not to have one. Council's Grave Digger does have small metal markers that can be used as a temporary marker.

Q – Is there another object other than a cross, a straight post perhaps? It is something to discuss with the Funeral Directors. Possibly the Men's Shed could do something for us – Wallaga Lake did something similar with either a cross or a rock.

**ACTION: BVSC to look into Men's Shed supplying markers.**

### 3.2 Business & Strategic Plan for Cemeteries

We have been in contact with a consulting company they have completed a number of Strategic Plans for other Council Cemeteries. They will be getting back to us with a quote and proposal. They have advised they will visit Bega meet with staff, Funeral Directors and other Stakeholders to gain knowledge on the history of Councils cemeteries and what is required in the strategic plan moving into the future

Michael offered to liaise with a friend who specialises in business and strategic plans for the government; he has previously been involved in a strategic plan for the Rookwood Cemetery.

This information will form part of a Business Plan to ensure that Council cemeteries are sustainable into the future.

There has been a Native Land Title claim lodged with Crown Lands that Council needs to be mindful of that could affect any strategic planning.

**Note:** BVSC has since received a quote and scope of works for \$25,560.00 + GST from a consultant. The scope is comprehensive; we will liaise with committees and the consultant to ensure we capture the information required in the business and strategic plan.

### 3.3 Fees and Charges 2018/19

Staff emailed proposed Fees and Charges for 2018/19 to committees noting that there was a significant increase in the excavation fees. This has been a direct result of negotiations with Council and the sole tenderer for the Grave Digging Contract.

In the process of putting together the grave digging tender document, it was found that the yearly (CPI) increases were not meeting the increases in costs to the contractor's business. The contractor originally proposed a 40% increase on some fees for the 2018/19 Financial Year; after some consultation this has now been split over the next two years, 30:10.

Q. Will the current and the new fees be published in the document?

A. Yes.

They should have a note attached explaining changes if costs have been consolidated to avoid enquiries.

Q. There appears to be some major variation in some of the fee increases, for example the shoring costs.

A. Previously there was the shoring cost plus the normal excavation fee; we have added these together to form one fee.

Q. The burial of ashes has also almost doubled, what is the reason for this?

A. This fee along with the installation of plaques fee was an add-on job, not covered in the previous contract and as such was hugely underestimated. The cost of travel, staff and materials for these works has now been costed in.

Q. Are these cumulative or is it just the excavation costs?

A. No, there are a number of fees for every burial; this is explained in the new brochure. Funeral Directors should be explaining this to their customers to avoid any confusion upon receiving an invoice from Council.

Q. Some fees do not appear to have increased by much, is it possible to increase some of the other fees to offset the others?

A. Staff will go back and revise the numbers and see if any increases can be made. **ACTION**

Q. What do you do in the cases where families are not able to pay these fees?

A. Previously there was a Financial Assistance Program, Council funds were allocated for use across all of Council's departments; We will check the availability of the current Financial Assistance Program. Some families have had the Salvation Army, Bega Cheese or Land Councils donate funds to cover some of the costs. **ACTION**

Q. Could some funds be quarantined from cemetery reserves to cover these costs?

A. Possibly we will look in to it and advise accordingly. **ACTION**

Q. Are some costs covered for burials where the hospital or police have been involved?

A. The state government will at times cover costs if there is no family, this is rare in this area. There is another option called a Direct Delivery service, this is basically where the Funeral Director takes the deceased to the cemetery, there is no service or family present. The grave is dug to single depth and is half the cost of a normal excavation fee.

One of the elements of the Strategic Plan is to find the objectives and goals we would like addressed, costings would be included in the plan.

Q. Is it possible to have the lawn graves flattened out and compacted straight after the funeral with a whacker packer so the grave doesn't sink? It can be quite confronting for families to return to the grave site and see this. It would save the contractor having to return and back fill and flatten the site at a later date.

A. We will consult with the contractor to see if this is a possibility, there are elements that need to be addressed such as rain fall etc. Cemeteries in higher populated areas, especially those with cemetery trusts would have a team permanently on site keeping on top of the maintenance. **ACTION**

### 3.4 Update on Cemetery Projects

#### Bega Cemetery

Drainage – Currently seeking external quotes.

Gates – Quote received, will liaise with Heritage Team on works.

#### Pambula Cemetery

David Ramsay Rose Garden Extension – Plans have been submitted from a contractor, a meeting on March 15<sup>th</sup> has been arranged for further discussion.

### 3.5 Grave Digging Contract

There is an interim arrangement between Council and the grave digger regarding the current fees. The 2018/19 fees and Charges will go on public exhibition before being endorsed by Council in June. A new contract can then be signed by the grave digger and operational for 01 July 2018.

## 4. Questions

Q. Burial Statistics – were those numbers indicative of an average year?

A. Yes generally we have between 120 – 150 burials per year. There are factors such as the environment and weather that impact the statistics.

Q. Do we have many burials on private land?

A. We would have 1-2 per year; these are handled by Council's Health Department.

Q. Recently there was a burial in Eden in a particularly hard spot; the grave digging contractor had set up the excavator on boards across some monuments to enable them to dig the grave. Should they consider digging some graves by hand to avoid potentially damaging monuments?

A. We will discuss this with the contractor, and monitor this in the future.

## 5 Meeting Close

12:10pm

## 6 Next Meeting

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018

### **ACTION ITEMS –**

**ACTION:** BVSC to look into Men's Shed supplying markers.

**ACTION:** BVSC to ensure contractors are aware of environmental factors.

**ACTION:** BVSC to review Fees and Charges to calculate if some fees and can be increased to offset others.

**ACTION:** BVSC to look in availability of Financial Assistance Program and possible quarantined budget for low cost burials.

**ACTION:** BVSC to consult with contractor regarding use of whacker packer or similar to flatten graves immediately after burial.

**ACTION:** BVSC to consult with the contractor regarding hand digging graves to avoid damaging monuments. Eg. Eden.