

S355 Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting

18 May 2021



Minutes

HELD AT **Bega Valley Commemorative Civic Centre**

Present

Michael Pryke	Jackie Miles
Nancy Grant	Cr J Dodds
Fiona Firth	Katrina Berenguer (BVSC Cemetery & Halls Officer)

1. Apologies

Rickee Marshall, Barbara Grant, Anne Greenaway and Peter Phillips

2. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes from the Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting held 17 November 2020 were taken as read.

3. Business Arising

Action Items from the last meeting

3.1 Drought Funding – Update on Progress of works

Bega cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal roads resealed / drainage improved• New lawn section – additional 116 plots with apex style monuments on flat concrete beam. Not designed for just plaques. New road for access to this area. Can be extended down the hill. Should be available for interments from July 2021.• New area low cost option - flat plaque onto ground
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Michael Pryke - Is there a test market?

Katrina Berenguer - Cooma cemetery has a similar area in place and is popular. It is cheaper than conventional area overall if a full monument is installed. Good for both lawn options to be available at the same time.

Cr Dodds – New lawn section – low cost option not sure about the grass growing over the top of plaque and disappears if the edge is not trimmed regularly. Higher maintenance requirement. Doesn't like the look – very plain/barren.

Katrina Berenguer – Need to have low cost options for burials. Plaque will be raised slightly with a standard plaque.

Fiona Firth – There are different markets and some people would like the new lawn section. Monuments are really driven by fashion. In the early 1900s – tall elaborate monuments with

symbolism. In the 1930s – depression era with only minimal monuments. 1980s – extravagant marble/granite monuments. There are many markets and different requirements in community.

Katrina Berenguer – Pambula cemetery have two lawn options – general beams designed for plaques only and the monumental lawn section which is fully booked and has been popular.

Michael Pryke – Could we look at ideas for low cost options to install a plaque on the new beam section? Top row plaques and bottom row monuments only. The infrastructure is already been paid via the Drought funding.

Nancy Grant – Prefer lawn section to have sloping plaques rather than flat. Writing is small and you probably need to get up close to read it.

Katrina Berenguer – Batemans Bay new lawn section has flat concrete beams and plaques are installed directly on to it. Contractor/monumental mason must install as per Council's Cemeteries Procedure. They do not recommend plaques installed onto the flat beam.

Cr Dodds – Different people want to memorialise their loved ones in different ways, and we should offer different options.

Michael Pryke/Cr Dodds – Why is the cost for lawn section more expensive?

Katrina Berenguer – We have a lawn section fee because of the investment of the infrastructure for the monument. All lawn general fees are the same at both Pambula and Eden cemeteries. It is cheaper for the family because you do not have to invest in a monument.

Michael Pryke – My argument is if the beam is paid for by a grant, we don't have any problem with cost recovery. Don't understand why it is cheaper for interments in the conventional section?

Katrina Berenguer – It has a lawn section fee incorporated in the fees and that is why it is more expensive. It is a contribution towards the beam and infrastructure e.g. roads and drainage.

Michael Pryke – The Lawn section does not require as much maintenance. In the Lawn section the fees are the same across the shire except you must put a monument on it.

Cr Dodds – I thought the reasons for lawn section is to reduce the maintenance cost and make it more affordable and the maintenance cost will be lower. It seems that we have strayed from that.

Katrina Berenguer – The lawn general section will look tidy and it is efficient use of space as well. Bega cemetery takes 2-3 men two days to mow and wiper snipper in between each grave and along the rows.

Cr Dodds – Either lawn cemetery is cheaper maintenance or not?

Michael Pryke – Why not bump up the price in the conventional section to encourage people to take up the new lawn section?

Jackie Miles – It is more expensive because you must install a monument.

Michael Pryke – Why don't we have a lower cost lawn section in Bega and in the conventional section increase the price because it costs more to maintain? People don't always install monuments; many people do not do it even though there is an obligation – not a legal obligation.

Fiona Firth – There must be an overall costing of maintenance across all cemeteries and this is why the pricing is what it is.

Cr Dodds – The plan for management of cemeteries is to make them sustainable into the future that is more affordable.

Michael Pryke – Why do we have to make it more affordable?

Cr Dodds – The cemetery fees are high.

Katrina Berenguer – They are not high relative to other cemeteries. We have just had the Cemetery Plan 2020-2030 adopted by Council which addresses this matter.

The cemetery function is a business unit with all maintenance and infrastructure costs being paid by fees and charges. User pays model. We have access to the expertise in Council on roads etc when required but it is paid by the Cemetery function.

Michael Pryke – Council already does mowing – Why don't they also mow the cemeteries for cost savings?

Jackie Miles – Not great for weeds/African love grass being passed around.

Katrina Berenguer – In past investigations, it has been found not to be cost effective for Council to do grave digging and mowing/maintenance in-house. Plus the current crews do not have the capacity to incorporate cemeteries.

Cr Dodds – I support place-based maintenance; for example, one crew does all the mowing in Pambula town and the cemetery?

Why is it a requirement in the lawn section that they be double depth?

Katrina Berenguer – It is to encourage an efficient use of space. Conventional reserves historically have been side by side and is not a good use of space. We cannot change that from reserves made many years ago.

Cr Dodds – Why do we impose double depth burials? What if a single person only wants a single depth and there is no need. I don't agree with this. Why is double depth required in lawn and not in conventional?

Katrina Berenguer – There are many reserved plots from a long time ago and often families brought side by side plots at single depth. Difficult to retrospectively change requirements.

Cr Dodds/Michael Pryke - Why is cemetery maintenance charged twice for double depth burials? It is the same plot.

Katrina Berenguer – Perpetual Interment Right is a one-off fee per plot regardless if single or double depth. Cemetery maintenance fee is charged per interment regardless of single/double depth and is a contribution towards admin/paperwork and perpetual mowing/maintenance requirements.

Cr Dodds – Why is there \$1200 difference in fees between the lawn section first interment and the second interment?

Katrina Berenguer – The difference is the contribution to the capital of the beam. First interments cost more than the second. This is consistent across all cemeteries. Excavation fee for single versus double is minimal.

Jackie Miles – departed from the meeting.

Michael Pryke – What is the cheapest option if someone wants to be interred?

Katrina Berenguer – Conventional section, single depth is approximately \$3k which is the Council fees only. Eden is the exception due to shoring required.

Cr Dodds – I thought the benefits of the new lawn section is that the price point encourages people to go with this option?

Katrina Berenguer – The new lawn section is cheaper than the conventional section if you install a monument. Smaller style headstones are quite popular and not as expensive as a full monument. There is a lot to balance where you are providing a service that is cost effective and offers low cost options with a perpetual maintenance/infrastructure obligation over 14 cemeteries.

ACTION: Council Officer to provide costings for the following items: -

1. Cost of cement beams designed for angled plaques
2. Cost of blocks designed for angled plaques
3. Feedback from maintenance crews about the difference between lawn and traditional areas

4. New Business

4.1 Eden Cemetery – historic grave restoration

Cr Jo Dodds has been contacted by Peter Phillips regarding a restoration at Eden cemetery.

Katrina Berenguer met with Eden cemetery volunteers last week and discussed some of the old wooden fences around historic graves.

Peter Phillips pointed out a grave and said that he replaced this picket fence 30 years ago. It is not a family member. It has now become rotten and needs replacing again. He believes it is in keeping with the historic value of the cemetery. Other volunteers on site wanted to remove it because it is past the point of repair and they believe that it detracts from the historic headstone plus it is easier to keep it maintained. The headstone is still in reasonable condition.

Katrina Berenguer advised the Eden cemetery volunteers that this issue would be investigated, and Council's decision would be advised in due course.

Fiona Firth - How do you know what was originally installed? Are there photos from the 1930's as a reference? Someone could have made it up, it is very difficult to determine.

ACTION: Council Officer to provide any records/photographs of the Eden picket fence and to provide a copy of the relevant legislation/conservation practice to make a decision.

5 Meeting Close

12:40pm.

6 Next Meeting

17 August 2021 at 11am