

S355 Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting

13 August 2019



Minutes

HELD AT **Bega Valley Commemorative Civic Centre**

Present

Michael Pryke (Chair)	Peter Phillips
Jackie Miles	Ricke Marshall (BVSC Property and Facilities Coordinator)
Fiona Firth	Katrina Berenguer (BVSC Acting Cemetery & Hall Officer)

1. Apologies

Anne Greenaway, Nancy Grant, Barbara Grant and Cr Jo Dodds (BVSC)

2. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes from the Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting held 14 May 2019 were taken as read.

3. Business Arising

Action Items from the last meeting

Cemeteries signage update

The signage project will need to be progressed via grant funding. Will keep Committee informed of any opportunities.

Eden Cemetery fence replacement

Eden Cemetery fence has termite damage and will need to be replaced within the next few years. Materials used will need to resist termites and marine conditions. This will be addressed in the Cemetery Strategy.

Cemetery Strategy 2020 - 2024

Committee reviewed the document and no feedback or suggestions were received to pass onto Kategic Solutions.

Council officers and Director have had some initial meetings to discuss the findings of the document and reviewed the extensive information and actions.

Next step is to meet with Councillors and workshop the document to get a clear future direction. Some more work needs to be done for the long term strategy and future plan for the cemeteries.

Michael Pryke supports two main areas in the strategy document:-

- Council Maintenance Officer to improve overall maintenance and health and safety for visitors. Important to have someone on the ground to oversee operations. Plus this supports the strong feedback from the community.
- Integrating the cemeteries roads network within Council's general roads.

Katrina Berenguer advised that some of the recommendations from the Cemetery Strategy have already commenced with initial meetings scheduled with the funeral directors and grave digger to establish a closer working relationship and finalise Permit to work in cemeteries documentation.

Natural burials are not an option in BVSC cemeteries as yet but it is recommended as an option to investigate in the Cemetery Strategy 2020 - 2024.

Cemetery Fees – 2019/20

There is a new list of the cemetery fees for 2019/20 financial year on the BVSC website under "Shires Cemeteries" section. The fees are listed by type of burial so that the families can better understand what fees apply to their circumstances. This was not clear in the past by just referring to the Council fees and charges document.

Michael Pryke advised that he had heard that some families are not made aware of Council's cemetery fees by the funeral directors and they get a shock when they find out after the funeral.

Katrina Berenguer advised that having the fees listed on the website should help families understand the cemeteries fee structure.

Michael Pryke asked why Lawn General with only one interment needs to be double depth?

Katrina Berenguer replied that it is a rule of the Lawn General section that all first interments are double depth as it is an efficient use of space and family members with permission can use at a later time.

Michael Pryke suggested that the descriptions for Lawn General be expanded to explain that the fee includes concrete beam, flower pot and flat place for the plaque and that you do not require a monument like in the conventional area. He suggested to removing double depth and single depth on the Lawn General description.

Conventional Shored fees at Eden should also include that the southern end of Eden Cemetery is not shored. In effect only half the cemetery requires shored excavation.

Action: Katrina Berenguer to expand the BVSC website cemetery fee descriptions in particular Pambula cemetery which have different burial options to ensure a better understanding of the fee structure for the families.

Michael Pryke noted that high BVSC cemetery fees have been raised in the media recently. Is there any truth to that?

Rickee Marshall responded that the cemetery maintenance fee which is a Council charge is much lower than other Council's but our excavation fees are higher which is set via a contract with an external contractor. BVSC has many more cemeteries than other Councils with a large area to cover.

New interments rights system in NSW

Back in 2018 Part 4 of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* was proclaimed which commenced the new interment rights system in NSW. Perpetual Interment Rights have replaced burial licences or burial rights. New forms and paperwork are required to reserve a plot in advance or at time of death. This new process clearly establishes who is legally responsible for a plot at burial and also for future interments or monuments. Burial licences or burial rights already in place are still valid.

There is the issue of cemetery capacity pressures for Bega, Bermagui and Eden and we need to establish actual requirement of reserved plots where people either do not exist anymore or do not want them.

We are in the process of gathering information from other Council's to establish a recommended procedure and way forward. Waverley Council has advertised a large 2 page notice in the Sydney paper to reach out to the community regarding old burial licences.

Wyndham Cemetery

Katrina Berenguer had a meeting with Jamie Dixon-Keays about the South East Weeds Action Plan. Jamie advised that the budget is \$4,000 and the focus will be on African Lovegrass and blackberry control. Contractors are due to commence control works in November. He did say that it is not a good time to do control works at this time.

Jackie Miles asked if the budget of \$4,000 will cover African lovegrass in Cobargo, Bemboka and a small amount in Towamba?

Action: Katrina Berenguer will ask Jamie Dixon-Keays for a schedule of cemetery weeds control works that will be covered in the next 6 months.

Once this is determined then Katrina Berenguer and Jackie Miles can put together a cemetery weeds control plan on what is urgent and identify what needs funding.

4. New Business

Weeds and Management Survey – Jackie Miles

The cemeteries ground cover is good because it hasn't been grazed. This is the highest conservation aspect but is being lost over time. African Lovegrass is taking over and deterioration has occurred. Towamba cemetery have low growing weeds from shorter mowing practices. Some of the corners of the cemeteries are not getting mowed at all which is representing a problem.

There can be community complaints regarding the grass being too high for visitors especially in summer. It will be beneficial to include conservation information regarding flora and fauna on the new cemetery signage explaining why the grass is not maintained at a short length.

Towamba cemetery was burnt annually by the RFS prior to about 2001 and this appears to have been beneficial. Rocky Hall and Wyndham were burnt once or twice after that date at Jackie's suggestion, with good effects on the groundcover, but both are overdue for another burn.

Top priority is Towamba cemetery. It cannot be burned anymore but urgently needs removal of small trees regrowth being Black Wattle and Native Tea Tree. There are also a lot of plants at this location that are not authorised and should not be there. In particular, silky oak trees and pine trees are popping up and a scarlet oak tree that needs to be removed before it grows into a huge tree. A plaque has been placed on the bottom of that tree.

Action: Jackie Miles, Katrina Berenguer and Nancy Grant (Wyndham only) to meet at Wyndham and Towamba Cemetery with the mowing contractor to discuss best ways to maintain the cemetery.

Once this has been completed, create a procedure to educate what is required to maintain those cemeteries. Identify significant plants and provide expectations on ongoing maintenance requirements.

Action: Jackie Miles to send Katrina Berenguer a maintenance schedule of each cemetery which was produced a while ago.

Rickee Marshall advised that Council will be commencing drone footage of cemeteries for mapping purposes and we could ask for significant plants to be plotted on the mapping.

There was a discussion about obtaining funding for biodiversity conservation but because the cemeteries are on Crown land they will not be able to be set up as stewardship sites until the Native Title Claim is resolved.

Native Title Claim – Crown land

Council cemeteries are on Crown land devolved to Council. The Native Title Claim is under federal legislation and was registered on the 31 January 2018 which covers from Illawarra to the Victorian boarder over all Crown land and four nautical miles out to the ocean. It will take quite a few years to resolve.

Action: Rickee Marshall advised that at the next meeting she will bring the historical status search on each of the cemeteries. These searches go back to the original parish maps and information from gazettal's that dedicated the space as a cemetery.

Eden Cemetery

Peter Phillips advised that at Eden Cemetery on the western boundary fence line a developer has cleared and mulched wetland and coast trees. The fence line is not on the cemetery boundary and he is concerned that the clearing has been done on cemetery land.

Rabbits are still causing problems at the Eden Cemetery.

Action: Katrina Berenguer to visit Eden Cemetery next Thursday at 9:00am to investigate the development clearing and obtain photos of the area plus inspect the damage caused by rabbits.

5 Meeting Close

12:20pm.

6 Next Meeting

Tuesday, 12 November 2019 at 11am