

S355 Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting

21 November 2017



Minutes

HELD AT Bega Valley Shire Council

Present

Cr Jo Dodds	Michael Pryke	Barbara Grant
Peter Phillips	Fiona Firth	Nancy Grant
Jackie Grant (BVSC Cemetery & Hall Assistant),	Karen Terwin (BVSC Cemetery & Hall Officer)	Michelle Preo (BVSC Property and Facilities Coordinator)

Apologies

Jackie Miles, Anne Greenaway, Darragh Reynolds, Tex Pena.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

Moved – Micheal Pryke Second – Nancy Grant

2. Introductions

Changes of staff brought about by the recent Council re-structure –

Simon Schweitzer has resigned, Anne Cleverley has been re-deployed and Michelle Preo will be the new Coordinator of the cemetery team. Michelle has a great deal of experience dealing Crown Land and property services so will bring a lot of knowledge to the role.

Anne came along to farewell and thank the committee.

Currently the manager role filled by Simon Schweitzer is vacant.

3. Business Arising

3.1 Update on Project Proposal – Bega Cemetery

Committee and staff felt the on-site visit and walk around at the Bega Cemetery was quite valuable, we will look to do this across the Shire in the future starting with the larger more utilised cemeteries.

We currently have some estimates to do proposed works internally; we will look to seek quotes externally for some of this work to see if costs can be lowered.

The first step in these works will be to rectify the drainage issues, which will hopefully enable to us to utilise more area for conventional burials.

We will then look at installing lawn beams and the memorial pathway. The lawn was originally going to be in the north east corner of the cemetery but the cost to prepare this area is too great at this time so we will install these in the grassed area near the entrance of the cemetery. These additions will be a low cost to set-up but will provide some income to enable further expansion in to the future.

Should the committee have all of the information for all of the cemeteries or are the works being applied cemetery by cemetery? Currently we are looking at works from a needs basis, where there is infrastructure lacking or where we are running out of usable burial area. There is a plan to put together a business plan for the cemeteries as a whole, through this plan we would then prioritise works.

Any major decisions will be put on hold until the final re-structure and manager positions are filled.

Data on burials and usage is available and staff will forward this to the committee.

Is there a budget for each cemetery or is this across all of the cemeteries? Currently funds are quarantined to each individual cemetery; we are looking at moving this to be across all cemeteries. There a number of cemeteries that perform far better than others and those smaller cemeteries may need some support from the larger ones for operational work and future infrastructure. In this there is the matter of reservations held and the need to carry out an audit to retrieve some of these unused or forgotten plots.

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

ACTION – BVSC to forward burial statistics to committee.

3.2 Bega Cemetery Gates

Council have contacted a local monumental mason to look at doing some minor repair work and cleaning of the gates, this quote has come back at \$660.00. This work will make them safe as the top of one was not stable.

Could these be moved to within the cemetery to be used decoratively? This would avoid them being further damaged by cars or trucks. Or could they be moved to the side to widen the entrance?

A new road could be constructed to the side of these gates to avoid having to move them.

Council will seek advice from a Heritage advisor to see if we are able to move them.

ACTION – BVSC to contact heritage advisor regarding gates.

Question was raised around the drainage at the Cobargo Cemetery, there is a large area of wet within the cemetery and it appears to drain down the centre. Council is aware of this but at this point are not looking at carrying out works, although the area of wet does not get mowed and there have been conversations around turning this area into a memorial garden as it is not suitable for burials.

Suggested that we seek advice from Jackie Miles around some natural drainage ideas so that any work is low impact and potentially cost effective.

4. New Business

4.1 Fees and Charges 2018/19

Every year Council must review the Fees and Charges for the upcoming financial year. This process must be finalised in February, we are asking that this committee have a look at the current fees, and forward any feedback to staff by the end of December as the changes will be input during January.

The cemeteries are currently self-funded, with no input from Council any monies that exceed the operational need are put in reserve for future works.

The excavation charges are an on-cost from the contractor with a slight profit margin on top. We have just put a report to Council in regards to the Grave Digging Tender and we will have more information regarding this for the next meeting.

Council fees generally go up by CPI each year; in the case of some of the larger sums for the excavation etc. the CPI is a major increase so in those cases Council will often round down. The fees go through a few steps – Officer level (Karen) – Coordinator – Manager – Director and then on public exhibition and then to

be endorsed by Council. During the exhibition period members of the public are invited to make any submissions.

Questions regarding Direct Delivery – this is a fee relating to burial with no funeral service, no family, no set-up, none of the niceties. The Funeral Director will deliver the body directly to the gravesite. This was a new fee introduced in the last financial year and we were unsure of how this would be costed. Council fees are still charged but the excavation fee is lessened.

Cemetery Maintenance Fee – This was previously two separate fees, the administration and interment fees. This was combined last financial year as a way of simplifying the fees as they are essentially the same thing.

Grave Marking Fee – This is applied at the time of burial and enables Council to mark a grave if it has not been marked within 12 – 18 months of the burial. This was put in place to help avoid the issue of unmarked graves in the future. We have just started installing these and we will bring an example to the next meeting.

Crosses that are provided by the Funeral Directors are fine as a temporary measure, these though will be permanent. In some cases families will not get a cross as this is an extra cost paid to the funeral director.

There is a large back log of unmarked graves that we would hope to get to eventually.

Eden Cemetery may not be suitable for these markers as the sand covers anything too close to the ground; the volunteers have a mould for concrete crosses which they have used in the past to mark unmarked graves.

Has there been any interest or discussion on geo-location technology to locate graves or digital grave stones? We started a cemetery mapping project a number of years ago, staff have done a great deal of the ground work for this including photographing graves using a camera with geo-tagging. This has been put on the back burner due to staff changes and budgets, the software upload would be very expensive. All of the old documents have been scanned and saved into the Council TRIM system and aerial photographs of all the cemeteries have been taken. We do hope to get back to this in the coming year.

Suggestion that some of the work could be crowd sourced, like the billiongraves.com website. As our information is the official, legal record of burials for the Shire this would be problematic. It is the hope that all of this information will be available online eventually.

There are cemetery trusts and Council's that are doing this well already; we will look to liaise with them to find out how they are doing it.

COMMITTEE – Forward any recommendations around Fees and Charges.

4.2 Pambula Cemetery Works

There is a garden located at the Pambula Cemetery, The David Ramsay Memorial Garden for ash interments which was donated by a family. This has proven to be a very popular option so we are looking at expanding this.

We have met with the contractor who completed the first part and they are going to forward some plans and quote to carry out the extension. Initially this will just be a small extension to the road and then we will look at doing a mirror image of the garden across the road, this suggestion was backed up by a member of the Rotary Club who carries out the maintenance down there.

The Rotary Club will be able to help with the construction of this will cut costs.

The Pet Cemetery often gets brought up during our conversations with the Rotary Club, this is something that has been discussed in the past but would need a lot of community consultation to ascertain if this would be viable. Being as rural as the Shire is many people would deal with these burials themselves or take their pets to be cremated in Canberra.

4.3 Cemetery Pamphlet

We have put together a pamphlet to outline the fees, what they are for and give a brief explanation of how to make reservations and bookings.

These will be placed with the funeral directors, at the front counter and possibly at the libraries. At times this information has not been conveyed by funeral directors and so this will help to get the information to families and to take away with them.

Suggestion that funeral directors make note of Council charges when issuing their invoices. We will make times to meet with them and discuss these in the coming weeks.

4.4 Questions

There is a WHS issue across all the cemeteries relating to the disintegration of monuments and headstones, slabs breaking up etc. When these become a WHS issue, Council will lay cracked headstones down; take photos to ensure the record is kept. These monuments are the responsibility of the family but when graves are 100 years old there may not be any family left.

Tantawanglo Cemetery – The church is to go to auction on the 4th December, access to the cemetery is over the church land and this will potentially limit the access. There is a crown parcel next to the church that leads to cemetery but will need work. Staff have met with an engineer regarding plans and costings to bring this road up to a useable standard. We will go back to the engineer to see where the plans are up to and what costs we will be looking at.

ACTION – BVSC to follow up work with engineer.

5 Meeting Close

12:35pm

6 Next Meeting

20th February 2018

ACTION ITEMS –

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

ACTION – BVSC to forward burial statistics to committee.

ACTION – BVSC to contact heritage advisor regarding gates.

COMMITTEE – Forward any recommendations around Fees and Charges.

ACTION – BVSC to follow up work with engineer.