

**BEGA VALLEY SHIRE
COUNCIL**

Cemetery Committees

Operations Manual



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Introduction

Council's cemetery management system

At its meeting of 18 August, 2004, Council resolved to implement a new committee management system to oversee the maintenance, use and development of its cemeteries.

Cemeteries are important places where the community can lay to rest those and memorialise those who have passed on. Cemeteries provide an important historical and genealogical link. The interment of remains not only requires legislative compliance by Council but also a level of maintenance and care of cemetery grounds. The number of cemeteries and their quality could not be maintained without the efforts of volunteers on cemetery committees.

The activities of cemetery volunteers at individual cemeteries are subject to this Operations Manual and copies should be made available to all members.

Council's peak cemetery advisory body is the General Cemetery Committee constituted under section 355 of the NSW Local Government Act (1993).

Beneath the General Cemetery Committee are Individual Cemetery Committees that Council has resolved to delegate authority to. This delegation enables the committees to undertake certain maintenance and operational functions.

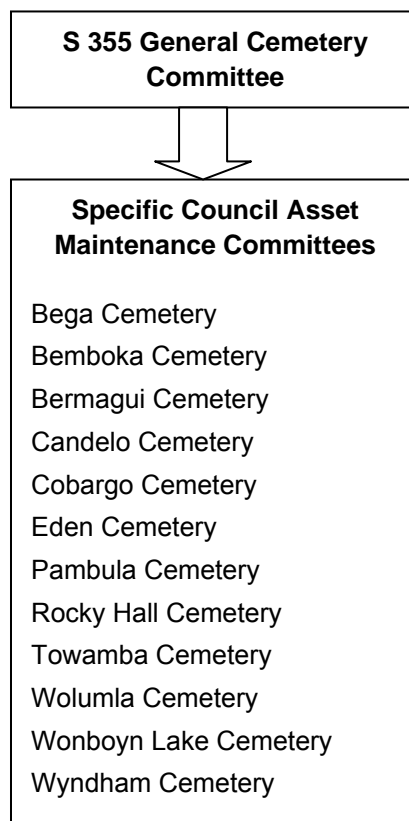


Fig.1 Cemetery committee structure

1.0 s355 General Cemetery Committee

1.1 What is the General Cemetery Committee?

1.1.1 Section 355 of the NSW Local Government Act (1993) allows Council to delegate certain functions to a 'Committee of the Council.' The General Cemetery Committee is Chaired by a Councillor with one member invited from each individual cemetery committee and the Coordinator of Volunteers provides a secretariat function.

1.1.2 The delegated functions of the General Cemetery Committee are to:

1. Make recommendations to Council on any aspect of cemetery management or operation, including policy, procedures and guidelines
2. Recommend to Council asset development plans for cemeteries,
3. Recommend to Council cemetery fees and charges,
4. Recommend financial allocations to individual cemeteries from Council or other funding sources.

1.1.3 All funds and assets associated with Council's cemeteries belong to Council. Council may, by resolution create, disband or amend any committee constituted under Section 355 or appointed by it as an Individual Cemetery Committee.

1.2 Appointment of s355 General Cemetery Committee members

1.2.1 Council has resolved that membership of the s355 General Cemetery Committee is to consist a Councillor as chair, one representative (or delegate) from each Individual Cemetery Committee. Once nominated a record of members will be maintained by Council.

1.3 Codes of Conduct and Meeting Practice

1.3.1 All members of s355 committees are subject to the provisions of Council's Code of Conduct and Code of Meeting practice. The Chair of the General Cemetery Committee will guide members through any issues relating to compliance with these codes. Copies of the codes are available through the Secretary of the General Cemetery Committee.

2.0 Individual Cemetery Committees

2.1 What are Individual Cemetery Committees?

2.1.1 Individual Cemetery Committees are groups of local volunteers who have an interest in maintaining a local cemetery. Each volunteer is to complete a Volunteer Registration form to enable insurance coverage whilst engaged in activities at the cemetery. Each committee should appoint a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. The committee may also appoint other positions as it sees necessary.

2.1.2 Individual Cemetery Committees are not responsible for the collection of any fees nor are they delegated to authorise any capital development works or maintenance goods and services in excess of \$500.

2.2 Delegated functions

2.2.1 Council delegates to each Individual Cemetery Committee the following functions and authorities:

- General care, maintenance and appearance of the cemetery
- Incidental expenditure to the value of \$100.00 at a time from a petty cash float of up to \$500.00
- Emergency repair authorisation of up to \$1,000.00
- Nomination of a representative and alternate on the s355 General Cemetery Committee
- Opportunity to engage in the development of a Plan of Management for the cemetery

2.3 Liaison with Council

2.3.1 The central point of liaison for each Individual Cemetery Committee will be with the Coordinator of Volunteers.

2.4 Maintenance function

2.4.1 The primary function of each Individual Cemetery Committee is the physical maintenance of the cemetery grounds. Arrangements may be put in place for periodic contract slashing of larger grassed areas so volunteers can focus on the finer details of grounds care. Specific arrangements will vary and should be discussed with the Coordinator of Volunteers.

2.5 Individual Cemetery Committee finances

2.5.1 All funds and assets held by each Individual Cemetery Committee belong to Council. All revenues (other than funds noted in section 2.6) related to each committee are held in Council's financial system. Each committee is separately identified in the Council ledger for both income and expenditure.

2.5.2 Any expenditure for goods and services at a cemetery in excess of \$500.00 must be authorised by the Cemetery Asset Coordinator and sourced through Council procurement section.

2.6 Incidental expenditure

2.6.1 Incidental expenditure is a necessary and crucial responsibility that is delegated to each Individual Cemetery Committee.

2.6.2 Incidental expenditure is defined as minor expenses related to day to day maintenance of the cemetery. Incidental expenditure may include purchases of fuel for committee equipment, small hardware and stationary items and postage costs.

2.6.3 A petty cash float of up to \$500.00 is available to each Individual Cemetery Committee and is to be managed and accounted for by the Treasurer. Expenditure should be in amounts not greater than \$100.00 and receipts and records kept in the books provided to each committee.

2.6.4 Committees may use a cash tin provided by Council or maintain a separate bank account, in the name of the committee for petty cash, donations and proceeds from fund raising. Funds held in these accounts should not exceed \$1,000 and must be acquitted on a quarterly basis to Council by the Treasurer. Amounts in excess of \$1,000 should be deposited into the committee's identified Council account.

2.6.5 In doing so each committee, the community, Council's auditors and the NSW Department of Specific Government can be assured that funds derived from or expended on their particular asset can be accounted for.

2.7 Authorisation of 'Emergency repairs'

2.7.1 From time to time a committee will be required to respond to urgent repairs. It is important that committees are prepared and equipped to respond appropriately to ensure the safety of committee members and the community.

2.7.2 In the circumstance where a committee becomes aware of situation that requires an emergency repair, that person or persons are authorised to engage those services necessary to address the situation.

2.7.3 To assist committees deal with authorisation of emergency repairs, the Individual Cemetery Committee should resolve which members are authorised to undertake this delegated authority. All situations where emergency repairs are undertaken must be reported to the relevant Council asset coordinator as soon as possible.

Definition of 'Emergency Repairs'

2.7.4 For the purposes of this constitution 'Emergency Repairs' are defined as works that must be undertaken to *'minimise or remove immediate loss or harm to people and property.'*

Use of accredited and identified contractors

2.7.5 Generally accredited or identified contractors should be engaged to undertake emergency repairs. It is recognised that this is not always possible, especially in rural or remote areas. Where no accredited contractor is available the committee or committee member is authorised to engage a relevantly certified person to make the emergency repairs deemed necessary.

Extent of authority to address emergency repairs

2.7.6 Expenditure authority to address emergency repairs is limited to \$1,000.

2.8 Plant and equipment registers

2.8.1 Each Individual Cemetery Committee must maintain a current register of all plant and equipment. This register must include all tools, furniture, vehicles, computers etc that the committee is responsible for. A standard format Plant and Equipment Register will be provided to each committee. Any loss or disposal of any plant and equipment must be discussed and reported to the relevant asset coordinator from Council's asset management section.

2.9 Cemetery management plans

2.9.1 Each Individual Cemetery Committee will be invited to provide input into drafting a Cemetery Development Plan for their cemetery. The Bega Valley Cemetery Management Plan will be produced in conjunction with the s355 General Cemetery Committee and designated Council officers to ensure the identification and implementation of regular, periodic and long-term maintenance and improvement works related to the specific Council asset.

2.9.2 The Bega Valley Cemetery Management Plan will be endorsed by the relevant s355 committee and adopted by Council. The plans will help to ensure the sustainable management of the asset and assist in the preparation of internal and external funding applications.

2.10 Risk management and occupational health & safety

2.10.1 Risk management and occupational health & safety are paramount concerns of the Council. Committees are regularly involved in various maintenance activities, physical labour and operation of equipment. Committees also deal with financial and cash handling matters that can present a risk. Council is obliged to identify and minimise any risk associated with the operation of its committees.

2.10.2 Regular cemetery volunteer induction sessions will be conducted so that various risks can be identified and measure put in place to address them. OH&S information is available through the Cemetery Asset Coordinator.