



METROPOLITAN
CEMETERIES BOARD



CEMETERY RENEWAL

Ensuring the future





MANUKA VALLEY
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OFFICES

SPECIAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO PUBLIC

ENSURING THE FUTURE FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST OPERATING CEMETERY

Since the *first burial* of Robert Creighton in 1899, Karrakatta Cemetery has become the chosen resting place and memorial location for hundreds of thousands of Western Australians.

With its rich history, Karrakatta has come to hold a special place in our hearts. It is a place to visit loved ones, friends and family of past generations – a place to reflect and remember.

Karrakatta Cemetery is managed by the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board (MCB).

A self-supporting statutory authority, the MCB relies predominantly on revenue derived from cremations and burial services. These funds are used in the cemetery to improve services and infrastructure for the public.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES FACING KARRAKATTA?

Karrakatta is facing *several major issues* in meeting the burial needs of the community.

These include:

- Lack of space to conduct burials
- Karrakatta's central location restricts future expansion
- At other MCB cemetery sites there are increasing external influences, such as the *Bush Forever* initiative, that are limiting the development of new burial land
- The requirement to ensure the cultural and religious needs of families are met
- Safety issues. Monuments on graves in areas where the Grant of Right of Burial have expired generally tend to fall into a state of disrepair and have the potential to become a safety hazard.



A FULL CEMETERY - WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

There are *thousands of full* cemeteries across the world.

Karrakatta comprises a significant land holding that is now technically full. Located within Perth's western suburbs and only minutes from the city centre, Karrakatta can't expand. There is, quite simply, no additional land available in the immediate metropolitan area.

With no capacity for expansion within the surrounding areas, it was initially anticipated that burial land at Karrakatta would be completely exhausted by 2004.

The potential decline in income derived from burials, combined with the absence of a sustainable renewal initiative, would have resulted in either limited or no ongoing maintenance or further beautification of our historic cemetery.

Disused cemeteries can be dangerous. The MCB has an obligation to maintain safety standards throughout Karrakatta. Loose headstones and crumbling gravesites can present a serious hazard to the public and cemetery workers.

Without a comprehensive renewal program in place, disintegrating monuments in areas marked for renewal might be removed in the interests of public safety with little regard given to historical considerations or the preservation of memories for future generations.

Across Australia and around the world, thousands of closed and deteriorating cemeteries in residential areas have been redeveloped for other purposes. Given the central location of Karrakatta Cemetery, pressure to redevelop the land of a disused cemetery could become alarmingly high.

Urban redevelopment in East Perth and its impact on the historic East Perth Cemetery may provide an insight into the future if Karrakatta was to close its gates for new burials and memorial gardens.



HOW DO WE SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

Keeping Karrakatta operating as a cemetery capable of **servicing the needs of a changing society**, as a site for both burials and memorialisations, is a challenge that the MCB has been respectfully managing for over 30 years.

The trend towards cremation has certainly assisted with prolonging the useful life of Karrakatta. It has also presented a great challenge for the MCB to develop a wide range of memorialisation options that reflect the ever-expanding requirements of families.

Burials still make up a significant number of the total annual services at Karrakatta with an average of 1000 burials taking place each year. This continued demand has ensured, if Karrakatta is going to fulfill its community obligations, that the pressure to provide burial land is ongoing.

To ensure that Karrakatta could continue to keep its gates open, the MCB commenced the process of *Cemetery Renewal* in the 1970s. A practice that exists across the globe in a variety of differing guises, *Cemetery Renewal* is best defined as the redevelopment of existing cemetery burial areas to accommodate new gravesites, memorial locations and mausoleum crypts.

The MCB realises that *Cemetery Renewal* is a sensitive topic and one that needs to be implemented with both compassion and understanding.

Legislation governing renewal programs is covered under *Division 4 of the Cemeteries Act 1986*.

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An example of a renewed burial area

RENEWAL! YOU DON'T MEAN 'DIG-UP'?

Cemetery renewal is **not about** digging up old graves.

Cemetery Renewal concerns the redevelopment of existing areas with NO disturbance to the remains interred within existing graves.

Put simply, new graves are located alongside old graves and within areas that were previously used as walkways.

Although there is no disturbance to burials below ground level, *Cemetery Renewal*, as the name suggests, does result in a significantly remodelled surface environment.

Once preparatory tasks have been completed, the renewed area will accept new burials, memorials and/or mausoleums.

The end result is the creation of beautifully landscaped memorial gardens incorporating retained headstones, a burial site combining new and retained headstones, a location featuring a combination of new and old headstones complemented by gardens or mausoleum crypts.



Memorial gardens within a renewal area

MAUSOLEUMS AND OTHER SITE FACILITIES

The MCB has set aside certain sections of Karrakatta for the **ongoing and future** construction of mausoleums and other site facilities as required.

Unlike those sections renewed as memorial gardens or as lawn or full monumental burial areas, the construction of a mausoleum or site facility more often than not requires the complete removal of all monuments and headstones from within the given section.

In these circumstances various options will be considered as will other opportunities to memorialise the individuals whose headstones need to be relocated.

WHICH AREAS WILL BE RENEWED AND WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

It is expected that most of Karrakatta will be subject to **Cemetery Renewal** over time.

Steps taken prior to commencing renewal in a designated area form part of a detailed process. Key stages are:

- Expiration of the Grants of Rights of Burial
- Historical Research & Analysis
- Community Consultation
- Implementation.



Expiration of the Grants of Right of Burial:

Cemetery Renewal is generally only undertaken in sections of the cemetery where the majority of Grants of Right of Burial have expired (i.e. the expiry of the 25 or 50-year plot lease). Many of the headstones in such areas have fallen into a state of disrepair and, as research indicates, are rarely (if at all) maintained by visitors to the grave.

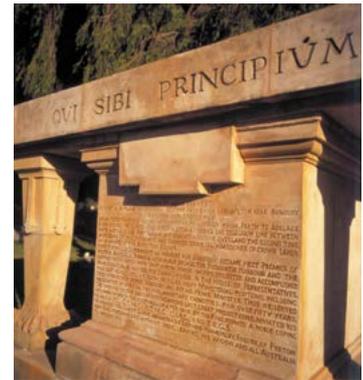
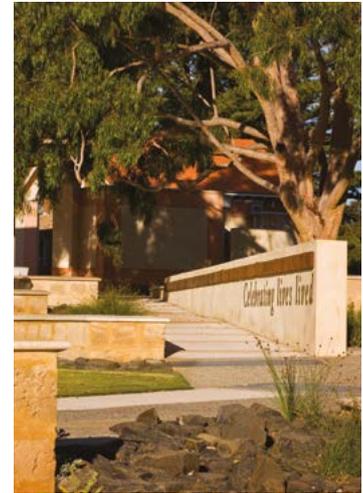
It is important to note that under current legislation the issuing of Grants beyond the 50-year period is at the discretion of the MCB. In any proposed *Cemetery Renewal* area, where the MCB proposes the retention of a specific grave, the grantee or family can apply to the MCB for further renewal of the Grant (beyond the standard maximum tenure of 50 years), subject to any conditions the MCB may wish to impose.

Historical Research & Analysis:

The MCB is committed to safeguarding the memories of generations of families.

Prior to proposing the removal of any headstones, the MCB consults with a committee that includes historians, genealogists and a representative from the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG). This ensures that all headstones are assessed across a wide range of criteria including, but not limited to, stonemasonry craft, historical significance of the persons buried and the cause of death. This committee is known as the Monument Assessment and Advisory Committee or MAAC.

Once the complete scope of the *Cemetery Renewal* project is established, an extensive 12-month community consultation period commences.



Community Consultation:

Key stages of consultation include:

- High-profile site signage
- Letters and information material are sent to families who have registered their contact details
- Press advertising
- Assessment of submissions received.

High-profile signage is erected in proposed *Cemetery Renewal* areas. The overall aim is to clearly communicate that the section in question is being considered for *Cemetery Renewal* and that those families or individuals affected should seek further information from the MCB.

The MCB also places signage at the base of each monument affected by a *Cemetery Renewal* proposal. These small signs remain next to the grave throughout the 12-month consultation period and encourage concerned parties to contact the MCB. Unfortunately many graves are not visited and information may not reach those for whom it is intended.

Given that family contact details are often not updated with the passing of time, efforts to communicate via correspondence do not always prove to be fruitful.

Throughout the consultation period, press advertisements are also placed within *The West Australian* newspaper. These notices advise of the pending redevelopment and invite interested parties to contact the MCB regarding any graves for which they may have a vested interest to discuss the options available.



UPDATE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

We Need Your Help.

Getting families to keep their contact details up to date is a constant challenge for the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board. Whilst we are aware that the average person moves every 7.5 years, our relationship with your family will last much longer than this. We may need to speak to you now or in the distant future. The easiest way to make contact is if we have a current contact address and, if possible, a telephone number. If you'd like to update the contact details for a burial or memorial location or to register yourself as an additional contact, please email us with as many details regarding the location as possible (names, dates, cemetery, burial or memorial). Messages can be sent to: mcb@mcb.wa.gov.au Alternatively, you can also contact us via telephone on **1300 793 109**.

The MCB has employed a Client Relations Officer to liaise closely with those individuals directly affected by the renewal process.

At the closure of the 12-month consultation period, all submissions on the topic are assessed and the MCB applies to the Minister for Local Government for permission to proceed with *Cemetery Renewal*.

Implementation:

Implementation is undertaken with the utmost care and dignity by trained MCB staff.

All headstones are retained in situ or relocated as close as possible to the original location. In newer memorial gardens, retained and relocated headstones are respectfully integrated within the new environment as a landscaping feature. Many families comment favourably on the unique blend of the old and new and how the headstones ensure a link to the past. Old kerbings are recycled.

Prior to *Cemetery Renewal*, every headstone is digitally photographed and the image and inscription are permanently stored within the records of the MCB.

This ensures maintenance of historical evidence/information and provides a link for future generations.

The MCB also maintains a special memorial book, known as the Book of Remembrance, for each section that is renewed.

The Book of Remembrance details all the names of the deceased, their ages, date of death, and location of original monument.

A box containing the Book of Remembrance is located within each renewed section, along with an overlay map which allows visitors to pinpoint the exact location of each original grave.

CEMETERY RENEWAL IN DETAIL. WHAT HAPPENS BELOW THE SURFACE.

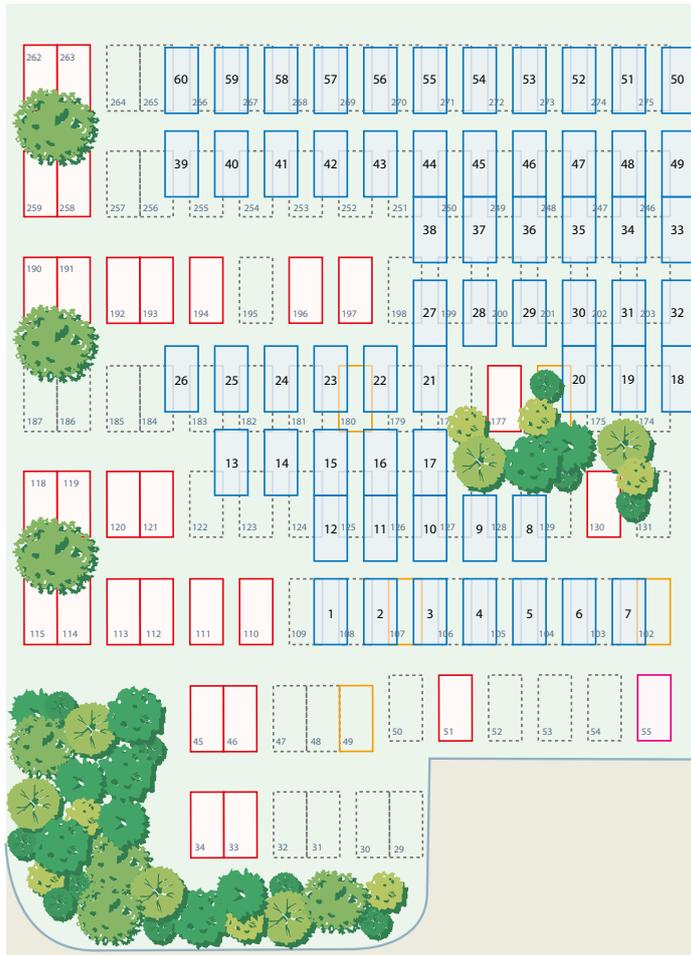
The diagram opposite shows a plan of a *Cemetery Renewal* section.

It is important to note the new grave is located within the space originally occupied by the footpath that existed between the original graves, with a minimal encroachment on the existing gravesites. This means the remains in the original grave remain COMPLETELY UNDISTURBED.



This is due to the fact that the encroachment on either side does not enter the centre of the grave where interments are positioned.

This innovative approach to *Cemetery Renewal* has allowed the MCB to continue providing burial, cremation, entombment and memorialisation services at Karrakatta whilst concurrently ensuring a sustainable future for the cemetery.



- 1 New Grave
- 110 Retained Grave Headstones†
- 55 Grave In Grant
- 107 Relocated Headstones*
- 109 Removed Headstones/
Monumental Work

* Grave headstones may be relocated for several reasons. These may include family requests, historical significance, environmental reasons and occupational health and safety requirements.

† These are headstones that have been retained in their original position.

WAR GRAVES & CEMETERY RENEWAL:

The MCB **recognises the importance** the community of Western Australia places on the sacrifices made by those Service personnel who died in war or as a result of their war service. The MCB has entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) and is the only cemetery authority in Australia that has done so. A representative from OAWG also sits on the Monument Assessment and Advisory Committee.



The agreement ensures:

- The war graves and crematorium niches of war dead, whether marked by private or official memorials, are retained in their original position
- The graves and crematorium niches of post war dead marked with official commemorations are retained in their original position.

If further information is required regarding war graves and *Cemetery Renewal*, please contact the MCB or the OAWG State Office on (08) 9386 3807.

The Perth War Cemetery and Garden of Remembrance is located at the rear of Karrakatta on Smyth Road, Nedlands, Western Australia.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF A FAMILY GRAVE IS LOCATED IN A PROPOSED RENEWAL AREA AND WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

Searching the **Cemetery Records System** (CRS) located at www.mcb.wa.gov.au is the ideal starting point.

Alternatively, telephone or visit our offices at Karrakatta and our Client Liaison Officers will be able to help with your enquiry.

The main options that may be available to you if a grave is located within a renewal area are as follows:

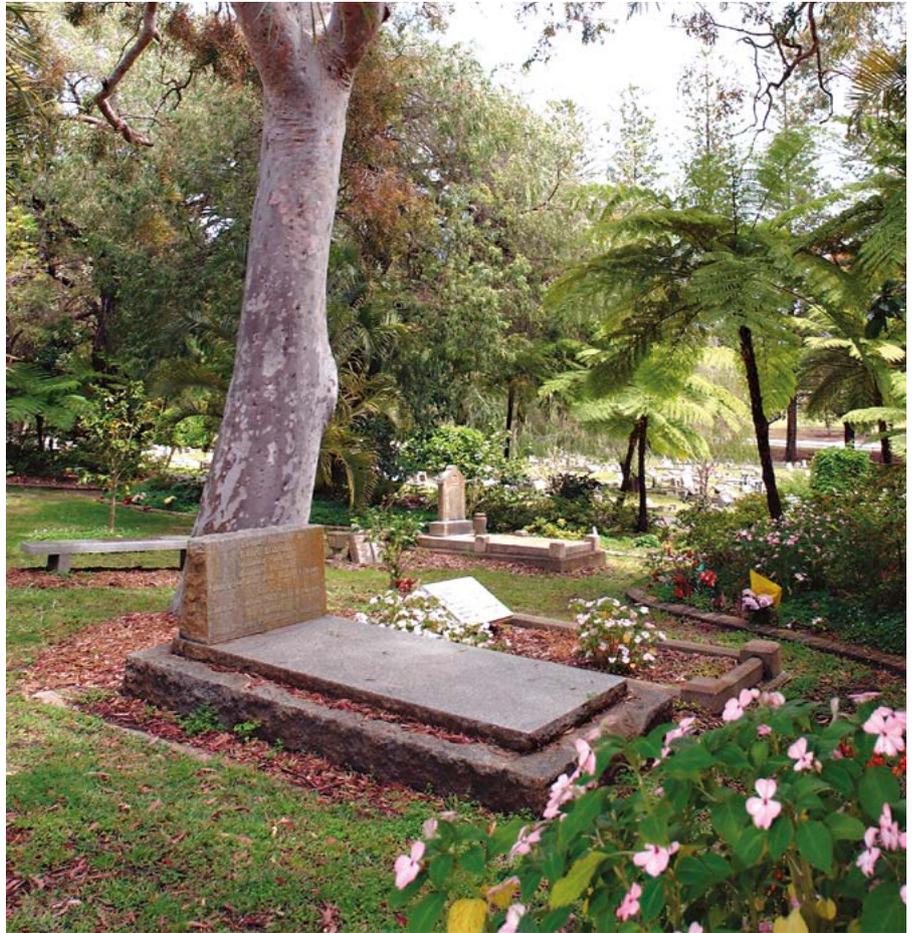
- Repurchase the Grant of Right of Burial on graves with current grant, retained graves or Official War Graves. Repurchasing the Grant allows for the grave to be reused as a family grave and, for many families, establishes a site of cross-generational import
- Make a submission to retain the grave for historical and specific posterity reasons. This will be assessed by the MAAC. A guide to preparing a submission is available from our office at Karrakatta.



- Have the headstone relocated within the renewed area
- Have the headstone relocated to another family grave in Karrakatta
- Purchase an adjoining new grave within the renewed area and transfer the existing headstone to the new area. This option is only available for areas that are to be utilised as future burial sections
- Collect and remove the headstone from the cemetery.

Through our Client Services division, the MCB welcomes the opportunity to discuss options and to ensure you have a clear understanding of the *Cemetery Renewal* process.

Our goal is to ensure the future of Karrakatta Cemetery and the continued commemoration of those departed within a beautiful and restful environment.





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