



Cemetery Review 2020

July 2020

**Narrandera Shire Council
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Narrandera Shire Cemetery Review has been conducted to examine current service provisions and management procedures and consider options for the future provision of cemetery services. Narrandera Shire Council currently operates six cemeteries across the Shire, each presenting different management challenges. There are also a number of private cemeteries and graves within the Local Government Area (LGA) that Council does not control or manage.

Taking into consideration the evolution of the cemetery, funeral industry and local government's important role in the provision of services and facilities, the need to establish a long-term direction for the care, control and management of public cemeteries is recognised, as well as the ongoing expectations of procedural and operational improvements.

In line with the purpose of the cemetery review, a number of conclusions have been reached with recommendations made to provide a clear and consistent direction for the planning, management and operation of the cemeteries throughout the LGA. These operational improvements and strategic directions take into consideration several key drivers including:

- Public expectations
- Legislative and regulatory requirements
- Industry standards and trends
- Consistency with other LGAs
- Retainment of the key characteristics of the cemeteries within the Shire
- Future demands on the provision of cemeteries.

The following key recommendations have been identified for Council's consideration:

1. Establish a range of clear and concise policies and procedures for the management and operation of Narrandera Shire Council Cemeteries.
2. Improve efficiency of cemetery operations through the purchase of a cemetery management system, specifically developed for cemetery management. The system is to assist with the coordination of records, reservations, and historical data to enable accurate reports to be generated instantly without unnecessary resource strain. The system would include a mapping program capable of capturing and protecting all historical data, including available for public viewing.
3. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness in the planning, management and operation of Narrandera Shire Council cemeteries through the engagement of a specialised consultant to review historical records for accuracy and develop site specific masterplans, complete with future extensions to address requirements of Section 90 of the *Cemetery and Crematoria Act 2013*.
4. Explore the additional staff and resources needed to address the maintenance needs of expanding cemeteries identified in master plans.
5. Ensure future budget allocations are sufficient to meet maintenance works identified within the master plans.

6. Engage a certified consultant to undertake the monument testing as part of the masterplan and cemetery management system project.
7. Acknowledge that under section 90 of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*, Council is required to have a strategic plan (individual plan or overarching) for Council-managed Crown cemeteries.
8. Acknowledge the Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance - Cemetery Maintenance Guide.
9. Council to explore options for the extensions of the Narrandera Cemetery and recommend that this should be explored through master planning with a specialised consultant.
10. Council to acknowledge the Barellan Lawn cemetery's forecasted capacity statement and support the concept of extending two lawn areas directly south of the existing lawn areas.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Narrandera Shire is centrally located in the Riverina Region of NSW, 554kms south west of Sydney, 339km west of Canberra, 437kms north of Melbourne and 824kms east of Adelaide. The Shire covers an area of 4,116 square kilometres. It sits mid-way between the main regional centres of Wagga Wagga (99km to the east) and Griffith (98km to the west), and marks the transition between the extensive broadacre agricultural areas of the western slopes and plains to the east and the highly productive Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) to the west.

The township of Narrandera (population 4,375) is the commercial and administrative centre of the Shire. The town is a district centre servicing Narrandera Shire and the northern part of Federation Shire to the south. Located at the junction of the Sturt and Newell Highways and on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, Narrandera is also a significant highway service centre as well as a popular location for travellers to stop.

Narrandera Shire Council includes the town of Narrandera and the villages of Grong Grong, Binya and Barellan.

According to the 2016 Census undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, of the 5,853 residents of Narrandera Shire 50.4% of persons were female and 49.6% of persons were male. Approximately 10.1 % of the Shire population identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Of the entire Shire population 20.0% were aged 0-14 years, 10.5% were aged 15-24 years, 47.4% were aged 25-64 years and 22.1% of the population were aged 65+.

The 2018 estimated residential population for Narrandera (A) is 5,931 People. This represents a 1.5% increase from 2016 when the population on Census night was 5,842 people. In 2011, the population was 5,900. The annualised population growth rate for Narrandera (A) is -0.2%.

Age refers to a person's age at last birthday. The 'Age' profile of the resident population details the age distribution within the region. The 50-59 years cohort is the most common with 874 people.

Table 1: 2018 Age Profile

Cohorts	Narrandera (A)
0-4 years	396
5-9 years	480
10-19 years	667
20-29 years	526
30-39 years	607
40-49 years	675
50-59 years	874
60-69 years	788
70-79 years	480

80-89 years	286
90-99 years	52
100 and over	11
Total	5,842

2.2 Cemetery Service Review Background

In 2014 Narrandera Shire Council undertook an organisational review conducted by Blackadder Associates. The purpose of the review was to:

- Review the operations of the Council generally.
- Review the organisation structure down to manager level.
- Evaluate the culture of the organisation.
- Assess the efficiency of operations.
- Evaluate service delivery options.
- Undertake a high-level review of the 34 functional areas (later changed to groupings to reduce the number).

The review sought to identify opportunities for improving the organisation, particularly in the strategic context, the culture of the organisation, the leadership required for the future and the systems and processes that will assist in improving culture and delivering on the strategy.

The review focused on a number of recommendations and although the Cemetery Service Review was not listed in the Blackadder report, Council identified the need to conduct a cemetery service review given following issues, findings and recommendations had been documented in the organisational review as follows:

Issue 2.4	The cemetery is a Council business and should have a business plan. Many other Councils have a positive return on investment from their cemeteries.
Findings	As a Council business there should be a Business Plan for the future development of the Council cemetery.
Recommendations	That the General Manager arrange for a Business Plan to be developed for the Council cemeteries.

2.3 Purpose of This Review

The purpose of this Cemetery Review can be broken down into four key focus areas

1. Identify opportunities and changes to management practices to improve efficiencies and cost control.
2. To establish service levels related to industry standards and Council expectations.
3. To establish costs and budget where service levels differ from current service levels.
4. To document processes to enable more efficient delivery of the service.

This study is not a performance review of the Open Space and Recreation team members or contractors. The report addresses levels of service and how these will be retained and improved in the future.

2.4 Objectives of the review

There are three key components identified as the objectives of the review:

2.4.1 Productivity

- a. Seek opportunities for cost savings of 2.5% for labour and materials to maximise operational efficiencies.
- b. Investigate a staff structure that supports this service and recommendations for improvements to work process (specialised cemetery training).
- c. Establish a base cost for maintenance services in Lawn areas and Monumental sections.
- d. Establish a target (benchmark) for maintenance services for Lawn, Old Section and Outer areas at all cemeteries managed by Council.

2.4.2 Risk Management

- a. Identify Council's obligation to contractors and volunteers working onsite and document a process to ensure procedures are adhered to.
- b. Identify risks associated with monuments and document who is responsible for the repair or replacement, also detailing a considerable number of unapproved monuments.

2.4.3 Asset Management

- a. **Review** the current cemetery policy and update to reflect current operational standards.
- b. Explore the use of cemetery specific programs GIS mapping to locate plots for immediate customer feedback regarding ancestor searches and to assist with reservations of plot.
- c. Investigate and Implement appropriate entrance signage to outline rules and regulations with monuments, ornaments, and vases.
- d. Investigate documenting relevant historical information for public viewing to be signposted at the cemeteries.
- e. Determine the useful cemetery life based on current operations and population forecasts and identify future strategies for capital upgrades and requirements for growth through a long-term capital works program.

2.5 Review Tasks

The key tasks involved in preparing this Review included:

1. Identifying all cemeteries currently under Council management.

2. Review Cemetery Policy and Procedures for burials including private land burials within the shire.
3. Identify Council obligations and liability in accordance with the *Cemeteries and Crematorium Act 2013*.
4. Identify monument and ornament management in line with current standards.
5. Assess plant productivity
6. Explore technology options to improve outcomes (specific management systems GIS).
7. Assess current operations ground maintenance and irrigation methods.
8. Review contractor and volunteer management.
9. Evaluate aesthetics and ensure a safe environment for residents and visitors while maintaining the aesthetics of the cemetery, including row numbering of old sections.
10. Evaluate the current maintenance schedule addressing optimal maintenance timing.
11. Review current booking and approval processes.
12. Review management of customer requests (GIS data and signage versus labour-intensive methods).
13. Identify the need for an NSC Cemeteries master plan/strategy.
14. Budget Control (10-year plan to address master plan).
15. Capacity statement of each cemeteries to ensure effective future planning.

3. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

3.1 Narrandera Shire Community Strategic Plan

Council's objectives and priorities are conveyed through the Narrandera Shire Community Strategic Plan 2012 – 2030.

Council's vision for Narrandera Shire is: we are a prosperous, diverse, and sustainable community, built on a deep sense of trust, care and commitment for each other and our environment.

Council's key strategic themes are:

1. A strong and resilient community and sustainable environment.
2. A growing economy.
3. Quality and sustainable infrastructure.
4. Efficient and responsive services.
5. Trusted and effective Government.

Council has developed a range of strategies and actions to deliver on these Strategic Directions, with responsibility for undertaking the actions allocated to Council departments.

Council's Open Space and Recreation section is solely responsible for all services in relation to the management of all six of the Cemeteries under Council's management.

The broad areas of control of the Open Space and Recreation section:

- Parks, including Memorial Parks – ensuring all green space is accessible and well maintained for the public.
- Gardens and Streetscapes - ensuring all gardens and streetscapes are aesthetically pleasing.
- Reserves - by developing and overseeing plans of management which foster water sensitive urban designs, land conservation and high presentation standards of open space and recreation areas.
- Tree Management Strategy and Streetscape Planning - by coordinating and developing action plans that support the implementation of Council's tree management strategy and minimising public risk to Council.
- Management of Sporting Facilities - by developing and overseeing facility management policies, venue bookings, and facility utilisation and works programs, including events.
- Biosecurity - by ensuring Council's legislative requirements are met, weeds management priorities are in line with regional strategies and management plans, protecting the economy, environment, and community from the negative impacts of pests and diseases, weeds and contaminants.
- Capital project - development, funding applications and delivery.
- Cemeteries – Adhering to the requirements of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013* and the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulation 2014* and the relevant objectives including demonstrating satisfactory levels of accountability, transparency, and integrity.

3.2 Open Space and Recreations Role within the Organisation

Public open space provides significant benefits to communities. These benefits include protecting biodiversity, improving psychological health and wellbeing, improving physical fitness, facilitating social interaction and cohesion, promoting community pride, and enhancing child development through play. Open space also provides a location for participating in civic life.

Open Space and Recreations core functions are:

- To ensure long-term planning, management and development of open space and recreation areas within Narrandera Shire Council, including parks, reserves, lake and beaches, and associated facilities such as sporting grounds and recreational areas, amenities facilities, walking tracks.
- To provide an opportunity for the community to connect and live healthy and active lifestyles.
- To ensure Council's most valued assets are well maintained and continue to meet the needs of the community.
- To improve the lives of existing and future Narrandera Shire residents and visitors, by delivering infrastructure that supports health and well-being outcomes and encompasses biodiversity values.

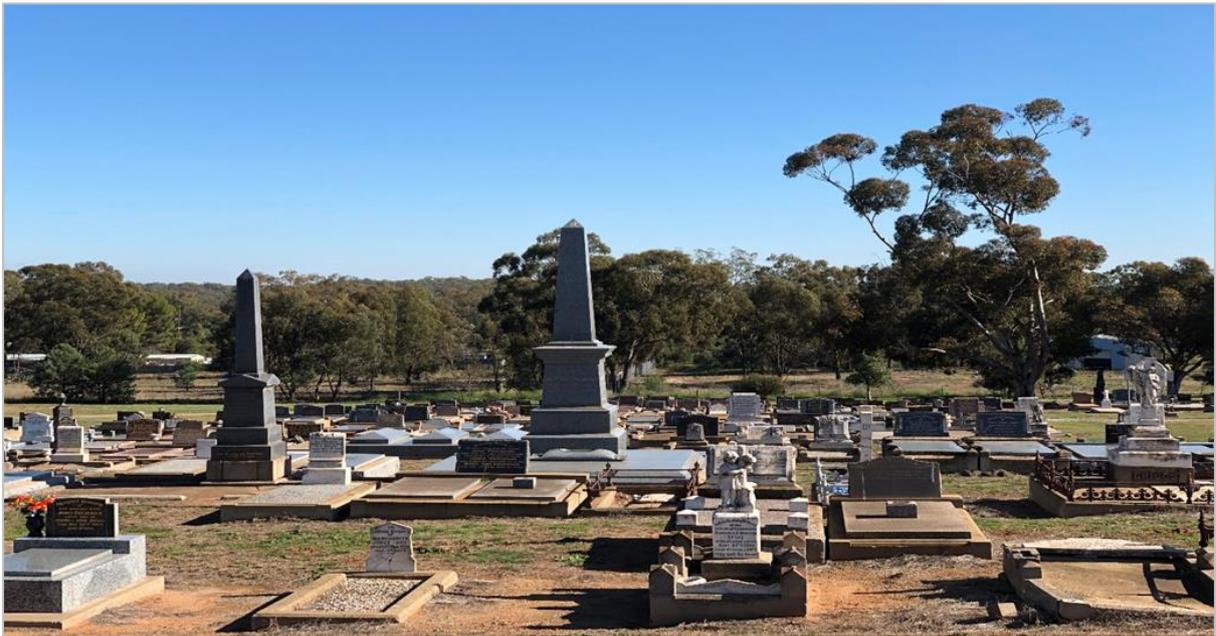
4. PRODUCTIVITY

4.1 Cemeteries Currently Under Council Management

Given the importance of cemeteries and that users will often be experiencing intense feelings, staff endeavour to ensure that cemeteries are welcoming and aesthetically pleasing.

Narrandera Shire Council manages three fully operational cemeteries. (Fully operational cemeteries provide for burial and memorialisation through reservations or at the time of need).

4.1.1 Narrandera Cemetery Including the Commonwealth War Graves



Narrandera Cemetery is located at the western end of Douglas Street, Narrandera, and was dedicated for this purpose in 1860. Research in the General Cemetery area indicates that the earliest memorialised interment dates from the year 1886. Narrandera Cemetery is one of the oldest in the area and as such forms an integral connection with the history of the entire region.

The Cemetery is controlled and managed by Council whose main objective is to provide and maintain an aesthetically pleasing environment that is sympathetic to its purpose. It has a monumental section, a lawn cemetery, a niche wall, Chinese Graves, and War Graves section. Due to soil type being primarily sand, only single depth graves are permitted in the Lawn areas.

4.1.2 Barellan Cemetery



The Barellan Cemetery is located east of Barellan with the access road being 1.5km east of the township along the Burley Griffin Way. It was dedicated in May 1909. The Barellan Cemetery has two lawn areas for interment, a monumental section, a niche wall for the interment of ashes and a rose garden for the interment of ashes.

4.1.3 Grong Grong Cemetery



The Grong Grong Cemetery is located on Lachlan Street East of the Newell Highway at the Northern end of the village. It was dedicated in November 1894. The Grong Grong Cemetery has a monumental section and a niche wall for the interment of ashes.

Each operational cemetery has both burial sites and ashes memorial options.

4.1.4 Other Cemeteries

Narrandera Shire Council also manages three non-operational cemeteries (closed or historical cemeteries that have either reached physical capacity or have been closed to burial and memorialisation for other reasons). Such cemeteries are typically older and have historic significance locally or at a broader level.:

- Colinroobie cemetery – Located on Bunganbil Road, Colinroobie Cemetery was vested to Council's management from Crown Land in 2019. There are several monuments located at the cemetery.
- Old Grong Grong cemetery – Located adjacent to the Grong Grong cemetery, the cemetery is bushland with no monuments located at this cemetery.
- Narrandera Pioneer Cemetery – Narrandera Shire Council agreed to take over the management of the Pioneer Cemetery in 2018 when the Cemetery Trust formally

dissolved. The cemetery contains very old graves of some of Narrandera's earliest inhabitants. It is now grassed over and only the headstones are evident. The inscriptions are still quite clear on most of the gravestones.

Maintenance activities for these sites involve vegetation and vermin control.

Details of Council's cemeteries, including their categorisation in terms of the above groups, are outlined in Table 2.

Cemetery	Address	Lot Description	Cemetery Type	Lot Size (approx.)
Narrandera	Douglas street Narrandera, 2700	Lot305 DP 751719 Lot 306 DP751719 Lot 7007 DP1024998 Lot 7033 DP1023995 Lot 1 DP1158505 Lot 1 DP 179974 Lot 7030 DP105003 Lot 7008 DP 1025002 Lot 1 DP 179974 Lot 7032 DP1023995 Lot 1 DP668097 Lot 7009 DP1024999	Fully Operational	9ha
Barellan	Barellan Cemetery Rd Barellan, 2665	Lot 7001 DP94878	Fully Operational	2.7ha
Grong Grong	Lachlan St Grong Grong,2652	Lot 7300 DP1136149	Fully Operational	4.5ha
Old Grong Grong	Windamere road Grong Grong,2652	Lot7301 DP 1135839	Closed or Historic Cemetery	
Colinroobie	Bunganbil road Colinroobie	Lot7002 DP94882 Lot 7300 DP1158264	Closed or Historic Cemetery	8ha
Pioneer	Lake Drive Narrandera, 2700	Lot 46 DP751719	Closed or Historic Cemetery	1.5ha

4.2 NSC Cemetery Service – Current Operations

In terms of cemetery management there are six key maintenance principles that apply with cemeteries, these are:

- Welcoming - providing a strong sense of place for visitors.
- Safe - enabling people to move around the cemetery in a safe manner.

- Efficient maintenance processes and cemetery design - to create ongoing efficiencies, in the short and the long-term.
- Serviceable - publicly accessible, as well as places that have discrete operational needs.
- Accessible - meeting appropriate inclusive access standards wherever possible.
- Sustainable including economic, social and ecological - choices made now will also affect perpetual maintenance.

Council provides for a substantial number of cemetery services - averaging around 66 interments per year. It has the care and maintenance of three operational cemeteries along with the general upkeep of three non-operational cemeteries that have been vested to Council in recent years.

In providing the above burial services, and in caring for the perpetual maintenance of the cemeteries, Council staff undertake the following activities:

- Management and maintenance of interment infrastructure to enable supply of burial plots and ash placements including:
 - Gardens and walls associated with ash placement opportunities.
 - Provision of concrete beams associated with burial plots.
- Liaison with the bereaved, funeral directors and the public:
 - To facilitate the sale of plots, issuing of burial permits etc.
 - Provision of information and discussion of options for interment.
 - To assist the public in the location of a grave site / other historical enquiries.
- General maintenance including:
 - Mowing, weeding, graffiti removal, etc.
 - Minor infrastructure maintenance and improvements to facilities such as seating, fencing and pathways.
- Management of contracts:
 - For infrastructure/major capital works such as concrete beams, ash niche walls, roads, and signage.
- Graveside assistance at burials and ash placements including:
 - Grave digging.
 - Provision of shelter.
 - Ensuring occupational health and safety around the grave site.

4.2.1 Current Service Level for Operational Cemeteries

- Lawn areas maximum 65mm height.
- Areas fully serviced prior to significant events (Easter, Christmas, ANZAC Day, long weekends, public holidays, etc)
- Trees assessed in accordance with Quantified Tree Risk Management principles and maintained in line with Narrandera Shire Councils Tree Maintenance and Replacement program identified in the NSC tree Audit
- Irrigation tests conducted weekly in warmer seasons

- Flowers left and ornaments left in place for one month after interment
- Narrandera Cemetery toilets cleaned weekly.
- Burials to approved and excavated as requested where practical, priority given to excavation and backfilling, in the event of multiple burials or forecasted weather extremes grave to be excavated and covered with appropriate signage where practical.
- All graves at Narrandera Lawn excavated to a depth of 1.5m minimum.
- Customer requests addressed within one working week dependent on the complexity of the request.
- Top dressing conducted four times per year.

4.3 Base Average Cost - Current Service Level

LAWN A1,A2,A3,A4	frequency	Growing season	non growing season	PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost	EACH TIME	YEARLY									
EDGING	4 HOURS	9 MONTHS OF YEAR	3 MONTHS OF YEAR	LABOURER	\$ 37.59		2	\$ 300.72	\$ 329.72	GROWING SEASON (fortnightly)	\$ 5,934.96	\$ 6,924.12							
				UTE	\$0.50	km	10	km					1	5					
				P4140	\$3	hr	4	hr					1	12					
				P4141	\$3	hr	4	hr					1	12					
											Total cost for edging per year								
BLOWING	2 HOURS	9 MONTHS OF YEAR	3 MONTHS OF YEAR	LABOURER	\$ 37.59		1	\$ 75.18	\$ 90.18	GROWING SEASON (fortnightly)		\$ 1,623.24	\$ 1,893.78						
				UTE	\$0.50	km	10	km						1	5				
				P3308	\$5	hr	2	km						1	10.00				
															Total cost for edging per year				
WHIPPERSNIPPING	2 HOURS	9 MONTHS OF YEAR	3 MONTHS OF YEAR	LABOURER	\$ 37.59		2	\$ 150.36	\$ 176.36	GROWING SEASON (fortnightly)	\$ 3,174.48	\$ 3,703.56							
				UTE	\$0.50	km	10	km					1	5					
				P3340	\$4.50	hr	2	hr					1	9.00					
				P4050	\$6	hr	2	hr					1	12.00					
											Total cost for edging per year								
MOVING ORNAMENTS / FLOWERS	2 HOURS	9 MONTHS OF YEAR	3 MONTHS OF YEAR	LABOURER	\$ 34.29		1	\$ 68.58	\$ 73.58	GROWING SEASON (fortnightly)		\$ 1,324.44	\$ 1,545.18						
				ute	\$0.50	km	10	km						1	5				
															Total cost for edging per year				
Mowing	growing season 8.5hrs	9 MONTHS OF YEAR	3 MONTHS OF YEAR			Growing	Non Growing		Growing	Non Growing	\$ 1,254.17	\$ 22,575.06	\$ 25,227.42						
				LABOURER	\$ 37.59		8.5	6	1	\$ 319.52				\$ 225.54					
				PLANT OPERATOR	\$ 40.43		8.5	6	1	\$ 343.66				\$ 242.58					
				P2763	\$30	hr	8.5	6	1	\$255				\$180					
				P2764	\$31	hr	8.5	6	1	\$263.50				\$186					
	non growing season 6hrs					trailer P2620	\$5	hr	8.5	6	1	\$42.50	\$30	\$ 884.12	\$ 2,652.36	Total cost for Mowing per year			
				ute	\$0.50	km	60	40	1	\$30.00	\$20.00								
OLD SECTION	frequency	growing season	non growing season	PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost	EACH TIME	YEARLY									
MOWING IN-BETWEEN GRAVES	17 Hours	9 MONTHS OF YEAR	3 MONTHS OF YEAR	LABOURER	\$ 37.59		17	hr	1	\$ 639.03	\$ 2,111.34	GROWING SEASON (5 times in growing season)	\$ 10,556.70	\$ 12,668.04					
				PLANT OPERATOR	\$ 40.43		17	hr	1	\$ 687.31									
				P2755,	\$20	hr	17	hr	1	\$ 340.00									
				P2761	\$20	hr	17	hr	1	\$ 340.00									
				ute	\$0.50	km	40	km	1	\$ 20.00									
				trailer P2620	\$5	hr	17	hr	1	\$ 85.00									
											Total cost for Mowing per year								
MOWING LARGE OUTER AREAS	6.5 Hours	9 MONTHS OF YEAR	3 MONTHS OF YEAR	PLANT OPERATOR	\$ 40.43		6.5	hr	1	\$ 262.80		\$ 522.80	GROWING SEASON	\$ 9,410.31	\$ 10,978.70				
				P2757	\$40	hr	6.5	hr	1	\$ 260.00									
																Total cost for Mowing per year			
WHIPPERSNIPPING	8.5 Hours	3 TIMES A YEAR		LABOURER	\$ 37.59		8.5	hr	2	639.03	\$ 700.03	\$ 2,100.09	yearly cost	\$ 2,100.09					
				ute	\$0.50	km	20	km	1	10									
				P4050	\$6	hr	8.5	hr	1	51									
															yearly cost for whippersnipping old section				

Total cost
Turf maintenance
Lawn cemetery
\$37379.76

Total cost
Maintaining grass old
section
\$24712.56

PEST AND WEEDS	frequency	growing season	non growing season	PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost	EACH TIME	YEARLY		
SPRAYING	3 TIMES A YEAR			GLYPHORPHOSPHATE	\$150	3 TANKS		150				
				SPRAY OPERATOR	\$ 39.84		17 hr	\$ 677.28	\$ 1,018.08	\$ 3,054.24		
				SPRAY UTE P2343	0.52	km	40 km	\$21				
				SPRAY UTE PUMP	\$10	hr	17 hr	170	per application	Yearly cost		
											\$ 4,094.24	\$ 8,266.60
	2 TIMES YEAR			BROADLEAF	\$250	3 TANKS		\$ 250.00				
				SPRAY OPERATOR	\$ 39.84		5 hr	\$ 199.20	\$ 520.00	\$ 1,040.00		
				SPRAY UTE P2343	0.52	km	40 km	\$ 20.80				
			SPRAY UTE PUMP	\$10	hr	5 hr	\$ 50.00	per application	Yearly cost			
FILLING IN BURROWS	8.5 hours	2 TIMES YEAR		LABOURER	\$ 37.59	hr	\$ 68.58	2	582.93			
				UTE	\$0.50	km	20 km	2	\$ 10.00	\$ 617.93	\$ 1,235.86	\$ 1,235.86
				SAND	\$25	M³	1	1	25		Yearly cost	Yearly cost
BAITING	3 days per application	2-3 Times a year		LABOUR	\$ 37.50	hr	\$3.00 hr	1	\$112.50			
				UTE	\$0.50	km	\$10.00 km		\$5.00	\$417.50	\$1,252.50	\$1,252.50
				BAIT	\$300		\$3 baits		\$300	per application	Yearly cost	Yearly cost
WEED CHIPPING	2 hr period	20 Times during growing season		LABOURER	\$ 37.59	hr	2 hrs	1	\$ 79.00	\$ 84.20	\$ 1,684.00	\$ 1,684.00
				UTE	\$ 0.52	km	10 km		\$ 5.20	per session	Yearly cost	Yearly cost
Garden	frequency	growing season	non growing season	PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost	EACH TIME	YEARLY		
MAINTENANCE	2 hours	a week		GARDENER	\$ 47.53	2	hr	1	\$ 95.06	\$ 4,943.12		
				UTE	\$0.50	km	10 km	1	\$ 5.00	\$ 260.00	\$ 5,203.12	\$ 5,203.12
										Yearly cost	Yearly cost	Garden maintenance
GRAVES LAWN MAINT	frequency	growing season	non growing season	PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost	EACH TIME	YEARLY		
MAINTINANCE/ Topdressing & Levelling	8.5 hours	4 times a year		LABOURER	\$ 37.59	8.5	hr	2	\$ 639.03			
				ute	\$0.50	km	20 km		\$ 10.00	\$ 649.03	\$ 2,596.12	\$ 2,596.12
				soil	\$50	m³					Yearly cost	Yearly cost
Graves	Time Booked	Average frequency's		PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost	EACH TIME	YEARLY		
Burials (backhoe)	Standard Burial 4 hours	45		LABOURER	\$ 37.59	hr	4 hrs	1	\$150	\$666	\$29,974	\$47,472
		Average burials per year		Plant Operator	\$ 40.43	hr	4 hrs	1	\$162			
				P2727 Backhoe	\$50	hrs	4 hrs	1	\$200			
				P2546 OSR truck	\$14	hr	4 hrs	1	\$54			
				P1319 - Boxing (shoring)	\$25	hr	4 hrs	1	\$100			
Burials-Hand excavation (standard)	Standard 5 hours	4		LABOURER	\$34.29	hr	5 hrs	2	\$171.45	\$430.00	1720	\$47,472
		Average Hand excavation per year		Plant Operator	\$38.21	hr	5 hrs	1	\$191.05			
				P2546 OSR truck	\$14	hr	5 hrs	1	\$67.50			
Ashes	1	7		LABOURER	\$ 37.59	hr	1 hr	1	\$ 37.59	\$ 47.59	\$ 333.13	\$47,472
	Hour	Average ashes interments per year		UTE	\$ 0.50	km	20 km	1	\$ 10.00		Average yearly cost plaques	
Plot assessments	0.5hrs	20		Supervisor	\$46	hr	1 hr	1	\$46	\$56	\$1,115	\$47,472
		Average assessments per year		ute	\$0.50	km	20 km	1	\$10			
plaques	0.5hrs	43		LABOUR	\$44	hr	0.5 hrs	1	\$22.25	\$40.25	1730.535	\$47,472
		New graves in lawn A1,A2,A3,A4		MATERIALS	\$18	plaque	each	1	\$18			
Administration cost	frequency	average funerals & reserves, customer requests per year		PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost each time	Yearly	YEARLY		
Record keeping	2			Infrastructure administration assistant	\$ 45.00	hr	2 hrs	1	\$ 90.00	\$ 10,800.00	\$ 12,600.00	
Funeral notices		120			\$ 45.00	hr	1 hrs	1	\$ 45.00	\$ 1,800.00	Yearly administration cost	
Customer requests		40										
Toilets	frequency	Average frequency		PLANT no	cost/hr/km	TIME/KMS	staff	cost	EACH TIME	YEARLY		
CLEANING	1	52		LABOUR	\$ 34.29	1 hr	1	1	\$34.29	\$ 2,069.08	\$ 2,069.08	\$ 2,069.08
		Cleaned Weekly		UTE	\$0.50	km	10 km	1	\$ 0.50	\$ 39.79	Yearly cost	Yearly cost
				MATERIALS	\$5		\$5	1	\$5	Yearly cost	Yearly cost	Toilet cleaning

Figure 1 Base Cost – Current Service Level

Observations and Assessment:

- Based on the information provided in figure 1, staff are continually seeking more efficient options to deliver the quality service that is expected by the community and Council. Staff have adjusted their maintenance activities over the last 5 years. Adjustments to activities include broadleaf spraying of the general section and trailing the use of growth retardants to limit the frequency of mowing in lawn areas.
- With the required expansion of the lawn areas, there is an increase in mowing and irrigation cost but will reduce the weed control actions along with increase the ascetics of the area.

4.4 Structure of OSR Section

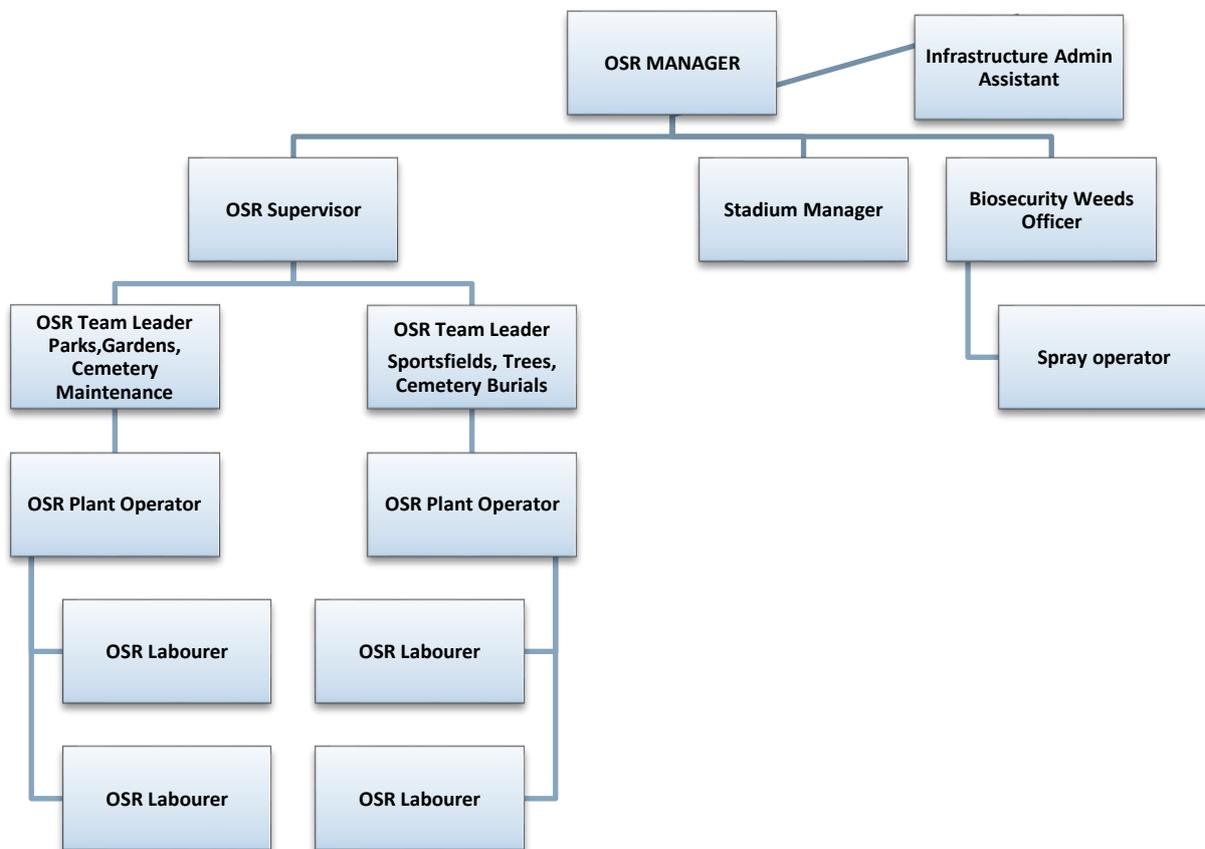


Figure 2 Current OSR Structure

The OSR section has introduced a two-tiered structure in 2019/20, the restructure was introduced to ensure priority works can be accomplished without influencing the general operations. Previously the structure only comprised of a supervisor and one team leader with no real succession planning in place. It was clear that the size diversity of the OSR core areas of management required a new structure to ensure all priority areas were addressed

without the unnecessary direction from management. Staff are still required to multi-task and reprioritise works schedules, but this is directly related to the size of the team.

The structure has been proven to be both more efficient and efficient compared to the previous structure.

Staff now have career pathways to progress into higher specialised positions and they have opportunity to undertake specific training in core areas without having an impact on the day to day operations of the unit.

Staff are responsible and accountable for designated sections and take pride in their work. This is evident with the weekly and monthly schedules as staff are proactively scheduling the priorities and amending the schedule to ensure other tasks get addressed according to priority. This scheduling also assists with forecasted leave as staff have demonstrated that some tasks, like planting or turf laying, have been bought forward if some members were planning on taking leave.

4.5 Key Responsibility Areas and Essential Tasks

In conducting the Cemetery review it is essential recognised the roles of OSR staff and the core areas of management in order to accurately establish a level of service that can be effectively sustained. The OSR structure has evolved over the last five years, with a team leader replacing the previous gardener positions allowing for a two-tiered structure to focus on key areas of management, this has also assisted with responsibility and accountability of tasks. The structure is also focused on succession planning, offering staff a pathway to progress into all areas of management. Although staff are still required to multitask, the current structure allows staff to undertake specialised training and will also incorporate apprenticeships as opportunity presents.

Below is a broad overview of the key areas of responsibility and the tasks being performed by the OSR and Biosecurity section:

- The Open Space and Recreation Manager (OSRM) is responsible for all aspects of the Open Space and Recreation including Council-managed Crown reserves, Lake Talbot and the Narrandera Wetlands, Cemeteries, sporting venues and user groups, parks, amenities, playgrounds, trees and biosecurity.
- In relation to cemeteries management, the role is responsible for the management and coordination of all cemetery operations including reporting, record keeping, customer service and the development long term plans and strategies to ensure Council-managed cemeteries are well maintained and managed in accordance with industry standards and current legislation.
- The Infrastructure Administration Assistant is responsible for all administration activities associated with the infrastructure section. In relation to cemeteries, the Infrastructure Administration Assistant is primarily responsible for record keeping, reservations, customer service and inquires, plot locations.
- The Open Space and Recreation Supervisor (OSRS) is primarily responsible for coordinating fortnightly works schedules for parks, tree maintenance, sports fields, playground maintenance, reserves. In relation to cemeteries the position is responsible for scheduling cemetery maintenance operations, plot locating and burials.

- The Open Space and Recreation Team Leader (OSRTL1) is responsible for conducting grave digging operations. The position is also responsible for conducting tree maintenance, Playing field maintenance, playground maintenance. This position has a crew of three staff.
- The Open Space and Recreation Team Leader (OSRTL2) is responsible for general ground and garden maintenance operations within the cemeteries. The position is also responsible for conducting garden maintenance in the CBD, small parks, entrances, reserves, memorial gardens, cleaning Toilets, BBQ areas, walking tracks and footpaths. The position has a crew of three staff.
- One-two casual staff have been employed where savings can be made within the operational budget to fund their employment.
- The Barellan grave digging contractor is employed directly by the funeral directors to carry out grave digging operations when available.

Given the resources available there is often a requirement for staff members to share roles and responsibilities to ensure priority tasks can be completed to a high standard and within an acceptable timeframe. **Cemetery burials take priority over all other tasks.**

Observations and Assessment:

The review discussed possible options for the employment of designated cemetery staff for the maintenance and operations of the cemeteries including grave digging. Work options discussed:

Week 1: 4 days located at Narrandera Cemetery and 1 day in Grong Grong conducting cemetery general maintenance on the cemetery and town

Week 2: 2-3 days at Narrandera Cemetery and 1-2 days at Barellan conducting cemetery and town maintenance

- Cost – employing a full-time staff member for the cemetery operations would cost \$69,030.39 per year. Additional plant would also be needed. At times of burial, a second staff member would also need to assist.
- The position would assist with an increase in service level. The review group acknowledged that the current structure proactively maintains the current service level that appears to meet the community's expectations at this current period of time.
- The overall cost of the position could be offset by an increase in fees and charges, but the review group acknowledge this may not be received well by the wider community.

The review group concluded that although the additional position and plant will be of great assistance allowing staff to focus on other core areas, the inclusion of a designated cemetery position should be explored in future masterplans, as the cemeteries are continually expanding and a higher service level will be required.

RECOMMENDATION 1

1.1: The review Group recommend that additional staff should be explored within three (3) years, future masterplans should reflect staffing needs along with the maintenance needs as cemeteries continue to expand, these masterplans should also take into consideration the expansion of areas that OSR service.

4.6 Essential Specialised Skills Associated with Cemetery Operations

- Staff have completed specialised grave digging training to ensure the organisation is operating in accordance with industry standards and also to minimise any risk to Council.
- Staff also have horticultural certification along with arboriculture training.
- Staff use Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) principles when assessing and reprioritise tree works. Tree maintenance priorities are detailed in the Tree Audit and Tree Management Plan which is referred to by staff when planning tree works.

4.7 Historical and Cemetery Records



Figure 3 Council Cemetery Records

It is believed that Narrandera Shire Council was vested with the management and coordination of interments at cemeteries within the Shire in the 1960s. Churches were responsible for interments and interment records prior to 1960s.

It is evident that some records have either been misplaced, not been passed onto Council, were inaccurate, or interments not recorded or lost during fire events. Due to these reasons it has been difficult for staff to provide accurate information to relatives for information requests prior to Council's time of management.

Council staff utilise the following records, maps and journals to coordinate cemetery operations and address requests:

- Five (5) original cemetery maps for Grong Grong cemetery.
- One (1) original Map for Barellan Monumental sections 1955.
- Five (5) journals for Narrandera
 - General section 1900-1925
 - General section 1926-1942
 - General section 1958-1992,
 - General Church of England 1942-1958
 - Lawn area 1 1979 – present day
- One (1) Journal containing record for Barellan 1967-1994 and Grong Grong 1965-1993
- Eighteen (18) historical records that consist of permits and reserve certificates, staff uses these records to assist with historical information requests.
- Administration staff currently use a spreadsheet to document, record interments and reservations.



Figure 4 Barellan Cemetery map

Council staff undertook a site survey of all three operational cemeteries in 2007. The GPS coordinates were plotted and all interments along with reserve were recorded. This information is accurate with what is evident onsite but cannot be relied upon for all unmarked graves.

The image below is the mapping of Narrandera cemetery. The contracting plot colours indicate interments and reserved plots.

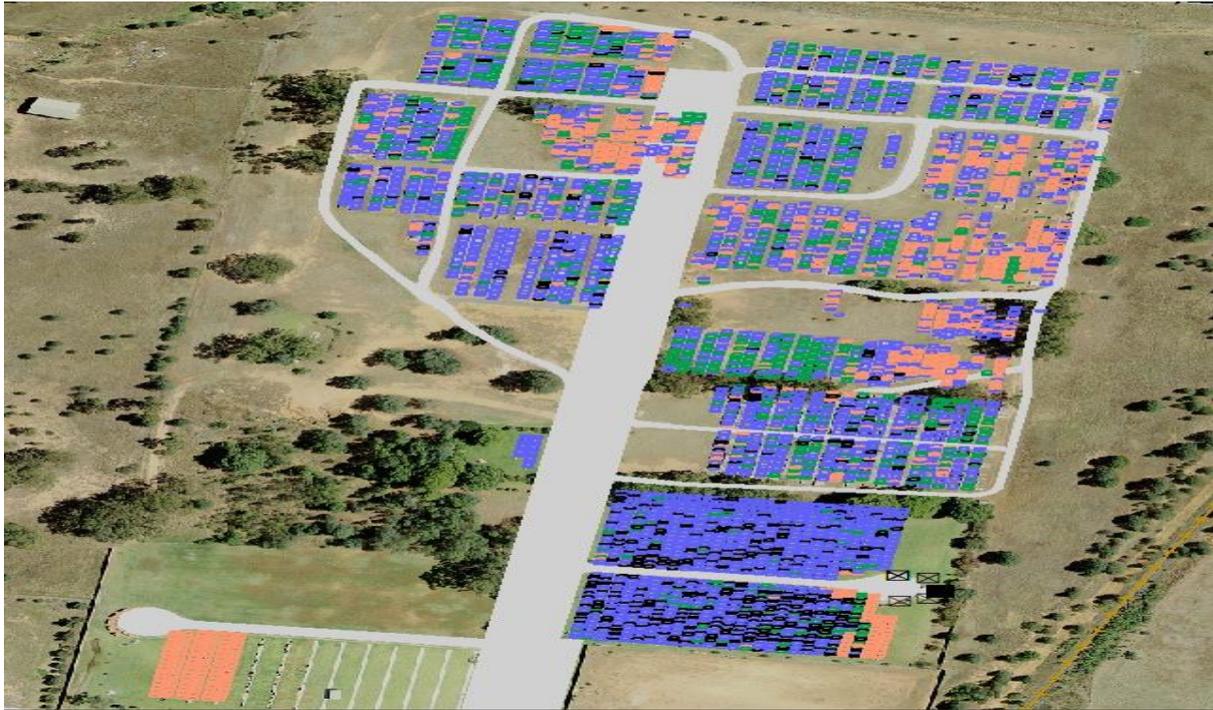


Figure 5 Narrandera Cemetery GIS plot locations 2007

There are unmarked graves at all cemeteries as this was not uncommon prior to 1960 - it is believed some graves were not recorded if the fees could not be finalised at the time of burial.

A common practice of past grave diggers was to use a system where a glass flower jar is placed at the head of each used plot. Councils current practice is to probe graves to find evidence that the plot has been used when request is received for a burial at an old grave site.

In 1988 the Griffith Genealogical and history society surveyed and documented monumental inscriptions and burial records of cemeteries located in the Narrandera District including Ardlethan, Barellan, Aria Park and burials on private properties.

All attempts have been made to keep all Council-managed cemeteries coordinated, neat and symmetrical, but as is the case with all monumental sections there has been a period where the graves and monuments are out of line with other sections. Staff have been required to reline new graves at these sites.

Due to the increase in "find a grave" web services becoming readily available to the general public, Council has seen a sharp increase of the number of information requests to located ancestors. These requests occur in a frequently with up to two requests per week and can be n very time consuming, taking between thirty minutes to four hours to address. This is directly dependent upon how readily available and accurate the information as staff attempt to cross check the information to ensure it is accurate.

Observations and Assessment:

- The review group identified that a more efficient record system is needed. This would increase customer satisfaction and staff productivity.
- Council should acknowledge the services of the Infrastructure Administration Assistant who addresses the historic requests on a weekly basis with the current record system council has in place. The need to create and document a burial process had been identified during this review. The process has since been completed. The process ensures that other staff can utilise this document to ensure interments can take place in the absence of key cemetery management staff.
- Council should acknowledge the possible inaccuracy of some historical records give the transfer of records is not an issue with current or previous staffs skills or expertise but is directly related to the inconsistencies with record keeping during the period prior to 1960
- Council to investigate the purchase of a suitable cemetery records, booking, mapping system to ensure Council's record keeping and reporting requirement meet industry standards and increase customer satisfaction. Staff investigated two suitable cemetery management systems with the cost ranging from \$100 to \$2,000 per month and \$10,000 to \$45,000 for the program and install. All current records should be reviewed and cross check for accuracy before implementing a management system, this should be done by an external consultant that specialises in this area.
- Entrance signage, row numbering and mapping should be considered to assist with locating specific plots in all sections. Signage is currently in place at all operational cemeteries for sections but only lawn areas have visible row numbers.
- Historic signage may also be considered

RECOMMENDATION 2

2.1: Council to obtain quotes and purchase a suitable cemetery management system for records, booking and mapping system specifically for cemeteries.

2.2: Council to approve funds for the engagement of a specialised consultant to review all council records, cross check cemetery sites and create site specific masterplans for all cemeteries under council management.

4.8 Interments Past Five Years

The number of interments averages around 66 interments per annum.

Table 2: Interments 2015/16-2019/20

Narrandera General Cemetery (Double Depth)					
Burial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
1st Interment	2	5	2	2	3
2nd Interment	1	7	5	1	3
Total Burials	3	12	7	3	6

Narrandera Lawn Cemetery (Single depth only)					
Burial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
1st Interment	33	40	50	40	51
Total Burials	33	40	50	40	51

Narrandera Ashes					
Memorial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Rose garden	1	3	3	3	3
Niche wall	3	11	4	1	0
Total Burials	4	14	7	4	3

Barellan General Cemetery (Double Depth)					
Burial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
1st Interment	2	0	1	2	0
2nd Interment	0	1	1	1	0
Total Burials	2	1	2	3	0

Barellan Lawn Cemetery (Double Depth)					
Burial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
1st Interment	5	3	2	3	8
2nd Interment	2	4	0	1	1
Total Burials	7	7	2	4	9

Barellan Ashes					
Memorial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Rose garden	0	0	0	0	1
Niche wall	0	1	0	0	1
Total Burials	0	1	0	0	2

Grong Grong General Cemetery					
Burial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
1st Interment	1	1	1	1	3
2nd Interment	1	0	0	0	1
Total Burials	2	1	1	1	4

Grong Grong Ashes					
Memorial Type	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Niche wall	2	0	1	0	2
Total Burials	2	0	1	0	2

Consolidated Summary	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total	51	76	69	55	76

4.9 Current Utilisation and Capacity

In general terms the site is considered to be at capacity when no new reservations are possible.

The review group calculated that with every seven interments an average of one reserve will take place.

Table 3 Capacity and Available Plots

Cemetery	Plots Allocated	Reserved Plots	Plots available	Average interments per annum
Narrandera Lawn (A1, A2, A3, A4)	A1- 747 A2- 614 A3 - 357 A4 - 0	A1- 64 A2 - 149 A3 - 220 A4 - 0	A1- 0 - at capacity A2- 1 A3 - 216 A4 -	42.8
Narrandera General Section	Information not included			6.2
Narrandera Rose garden	38	30	38	2.6
Narrandera Niche wall	Niche Wall 1 – 73 Niche Wall Western - 28	Niche Wall 1 – 17 Niche Wall Western - 20	Niche Wall 1 – 2 Niche Wall Western - 57	3.8
Barellan General Section	Information not included			1.6
Barellan Lawn	Eastern Lawn – 93 Western Lawn - 15	Eastern Lawn – 27 Eastern Lawn - 12	Eastern Lawn – 0 - at capacity Western Lawn - 78	5.8
Barellan Rose Garden 1	2	1	39	0.2
Barellan Niche Wall	5	2	13	0.2
Grong Grong General Section	Information not included			1.8
Grong Grong Niche Wall	6	0	14	1

- An average of 66 interments take place per annum, averaging 1.3 interments per week.
- Narrandera Lawn area A1 is at capacity with one (1) plot being available in lawn area A2
- Barellan Eastern Lawn has reached capacity.
- Records from the General sections have not been included into this assessment. This is mainly due to the time take to cross check records for accuracy. The review group recommends that the capacity assessment should be conducted in more detail by a specialist to provide an accurate assessment of all available records and site information.

Observations and Assessment:

- Narrandera Lawn sections interments average 42.8 lawn area interments per year. This indicates that the lawn section will reach capacity within 23.5 years.
- The review group recognises the need to explore options for the extension of the Narrandera Cemetery and recommend that this should be explored through master planning.
- The western Barellan Lawn section will reach capacity at a minimum of 16.5 years with an average interment rate of 5.8 per year and a maximum of 20 years with an average of 1.6 second interments.
- The review group recommends that the capacity assessment should be conducted in more detail by a specialist to provide an accurate assessment of all available records and site information.

4.10 Financial Performance

Financial results of the cemetery services are directly aligned with number of deaths along with the number of reservations resulting burials or memorialisation's that occur over a given period. This is particularly true in terms of revenue, which can change significantly from year to year. Additional costs may also be borne by cemeteries from year to year in terms of pre-emptive capital works (eg: niche walls, landscape upgrades, lawn beams, road and carpark upgrades etc.).

A review of revenue, expenses, overall operating results are provided below over the past five years. For reference, it is noted that the number of burials, reservations and memorialisation's undertaken at the cemeteries is shown in Table 2 and Table 3

Net Operating Results Summary

Column 1	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	5 year average
Revenue	86207.01	127,708.60	133,816.73	116,968.95	152,972.32	123,534.72
Expenses (including rates, insurances and depreciation)	117,418.67	107,835.02	142,546.72	137,705.62	149,580.68	131,017.34
Net Operating Result	-31,211.66	19,873.58	-8,729.99	-20,736.67	3,391.64	-7,482.62

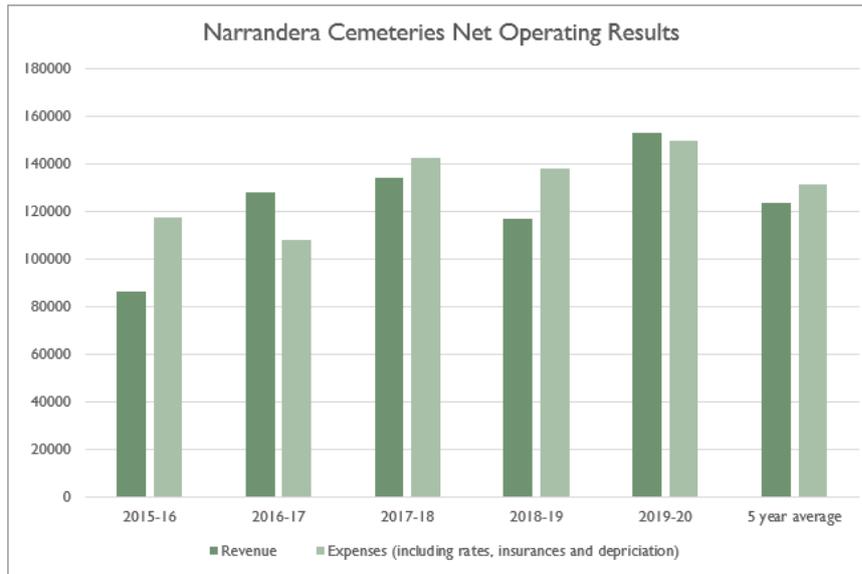


Figure 6 Operating Summary

OPERATING EXPENSES						
EXPENSE	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	Average
Maintenance expenses	96,986.84	97,635.02	102,502.72	104,336.63	129,960.50	106,284.34
Engineers contribution	10,000.00	10,200.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,040.00
Rates	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,905.45	9,620.18	2,505.13
Insurances	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.90	0.00	4.18
Depreciation - Specialised	10,431.83	0.00	30,044.00	20,442.64	0.00	12,183.69
Total	117,418.67	107,835.02	142,546.72	137,705.62	149,580.68	131,017.34

Figure 7 Operating Expenses

4.10.1 Revenue

Revenue streams exist within cemetery operations, with the significant and recurring ones being:

- Interment permits: paid to Council on reservation/purchase of a burial plot (either at the time of need or in advance) and including any out of area payments as applicable.
- Burial fees: paid to Council on uptake of a burial permit via interment of the body; and
- Grave digging fees: also paid to Council to cover costs associated with Council's grave digging operations.

Other minor income streams include fees associated with ash interments within memorial walls, gardens and plots, and other minor fees and charges. In overall terms, (except for

2015-16) over the last 4 years total revenue has grown by \$25,263.72 around 20% increase, though these results are variable from year to year, as shown in the graph at Figure 8.

4.10.2 Expenses

Like revenues, there are a number of expense streams that exist within the service, the significant and recurring ones being:

- Employment / staff costs – These costs are directly associated with the operational maintenance of the cemeteries with staff booking their time to each individual cemetery and the tasks that they are addressing.
- Materials and equipment costs - relating to the general maintenance and improvements within the cemeteries.
- Contracts - including contracted capital works, facility and infrastructure repairs and maintenance
- Utilities –cemeteries now have water charges at full rates. With the current climate, the continual extension of Lawn areas and the increase customer expectations these charges will continually increase substantially.

Other minor expense streams include internal plant costs, business overheads (rates, utilities etc.), and corporate overheads (HR, finance, management etc.).

It is noted that with future improvements and the continual expansion and growth of cemeteries depreciation will also increase.

Observations and Assessment:

- There has been a 20% increase in revenue over the last four years
- In general terms Councils' net operating result is in line with the current expenses. Years where a negative net operating result has been recorded is directly related to depreciation

4.11 Fees and Charges Cost Comparison

When reviewing cemetery-based fees and charges, a comparison was undertaken with Leeton Shire Council and Griffith City Council.

The fees and charges structure varied between councils, with Griffith and Leeton both having total burial fees compared to Narrandera having fees for each component of the interment.

Figure 9 provides fees and charges cost comparison between the three councils.

By assessing these fees and charges the review group can conclude that Narrandera Shire cemetery fees and charges are in line with the neighbouring councils.

Cemetery Fees & Charges COMPARISON

2019-20	Narrandera	Barellan	Grong Grong	Leeton	Griffith
Column1	Column2	Column2	Column222	Column3	Column4
General					
Average total per interment	\$2,709.00	\$2,709.00	\$2,887.00	\$3,210.00	\$2,014.00
Land	\$1,035.00	\$1,035.00	\$1,035.00		
Land - Perpetual maintenance	\$451.00	\$451.00	\$451.00		
Interment Permit	\$178.00	\$178.00	\$178.00		inc
Headstone Permit	\$99.00	\$99.00	\$99.00		inc
General 1st Interment - Adult casket	\$946.00	\$946.00	\$946.00	\$3,210.00	\$2,014.00
General 2nd Interment - Adult casket	\$946.00	\$946.00	\$946.00	\$1,085.00	\$1,142.00
General 1st Interment - Infant casket	\$473.00	\$473.00	\$473.00		\$960.00
General 2nd Interment - Infant casket					\$450.00
General Ashes Interment	\$473.00	\$473.00	\$473.00		\$314.00
Travel		\$288.00	\$178.00		
Lawn	\$2,709.00	\$2,709.00		\$3,945.00	\$3,075.00
Average total per interment					
Land	\$1,035.00	\$1,035.00			
Land - Perpetual maintenance	\$451.00	\$451.00			
Interment Permit	\$178.00	\$178.00			inc
Headstone Permit	\$99.00	\$99.00			inc
Lawn 1st Interment - Adult casket	\$946.00	\$946.00		\$3,945.00	\$3,075.00
Lawn 2nd Interment - Adult casket		\$946.00		\$1,295.00	\$1,433.00
Lawn 1st Interment - Infant casket	\$473.00	\$473.00		\$3,660.00	\$1,614.00
Lawn 2nd Interment - Infant casket					\$1,374.00
Ashes Interment	\$473.00	\$473.00			\$777.00
Niche wall					
Average total per interment	\$1,082.00	\$1,658.00	\$1,548.00		\$1,349.00
Niche wall ashes allocation, interment and plaque	\$805.00	\$805.00	\$805.00		\$1,349.00
Supply and install vase	\$99.00	\$99.00	\$99.00		inc
Interment permit	\$178.00	\$178.00	\$178.00		inc
Reservation	\$515.00	\$515.00	\$515.00		
Interment into reserve	\$288.00	\$288.00	\$288.00		
		\$288.00	\$178.00		
Rose Garden	\$1,271.00	\$1,559.00		\$1,485.00	\$1,155.00
Average total per interment					
Rose Garden ashes allocation and intern	\$805.00	\$805.00		\$1,485.00	\$1,155.00
Interment permit	\$178.00	\$178.00			inc
Reservation	\$515.00	\$515.00		\$575.00	
Interment into reserve	\$288.00	\$288.00			
Travel		\$288.00			

Figure 8 Fees and Charges Comparison

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 Legislative requirements

Local Government controlled cemeteries were once subject to Ordinance 68 of the old *Local Government Act* (1919). The *Local Government Act* 1993 does not include any cemetery specific legislation. As such, the care, control, and management of cemeteries are covered by a range of legislations, charters, and Funeral Industry Guidelines. Following is a listing of the key relevant legislative provisions:

- Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013 (C&C Act).
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991
- Birth Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995
- Conversion of Cemeteries Act 1974
- Coroners Act 1980
- Crown Lands Management Act 2016
- Crown Lands (General Reserves) Amendment (Sustainable Burials) By-laws 2011
- Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 & Environmental Planning & Assessment Regulation 2000
- Fair Trading 1987 & Fair Trading General Regulations 2002
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Health Records Information Privacy Act 2002
- AS-4204 (2019) Headstone and cemetery monuments
- Heritage Act 1977
- Human Tissues Act 1993
- Local Government Act 1993
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- Public Health Act 2010
- Public Health Regulation 2012
- State Records Act 1998
- Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995
- Threatened Species Conservation Amendment Act 2002
- Threatened Species Legislation Amendment Act 2004
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 & Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017
- Workers Compensation Act 1987 & Workplace Injury Management & Workers Compensation Act 1998.

Observations and Assessment:

- The inter-relationship of both legislation and regulatory information required in cemetery operations is of a complex nature.

- All related policies and procedures will be required to be clear and concise to be compliant with legislation/regulations and transparent to staff, customers and all external agents.
- Staff are now able to refer to the Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW – Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance to ensure Councils obligations are met and any risk to the organisations is minimised.
- Any future planning or master must be in accordance with the current industry standards and relevant legislation.
- Under section 90 of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*, Council is required to have a strategic plan for Council-managed Crown cemeteries. Council does not currently have a strategic plan in place.

RECOMMENDATION 3

3.1: Council acknowledge that Under section 90 of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*, Council is required to have a strategic plan (individual plan or overarching) for Council managed Crown cemeteries.

5.2 Contractors and Volunteers

Requirements for Works within Council Cemeteries by External Agents

Council has a responsibility to ensure that all activities conducted within its cemeteries comply with the requirements of the Work Health & Safety Act 2011 and the Work Health & Safety Regulation 2017 and associated legislation.

Some Councils have introduced a range of permits and guidelines for the operation of external agents in local government managed cemeteries.

External agents include but are not limited to funeral directors, monumental masons, grave diggers, their employees and any second parties that carry out services for them. The activities that they undertake include but are not limited to; excavation and site restoration; landscaping; funeral services; equipment maintenance; construction and maintenance of structures and monuments; lifting and transport and the disposal of surplus materials.

To date these identified works have been undertaken without any formal agreement between Council and the external agents. As with other areas of Council's operations, it is proposed that Council implement a specific agreement with external agents through the introduction of a permit and associated guidelines to operate within Council's cemeteries. The agreement and permit is aimed at clarifying responsibilities and accountability

Narrandera Shire Council currently has an approved contractor register in place to ensure all insurances and certificates are current.

Volunteer groups are required to be inducted under Councils volunteer induction register.

5.3 Monuments

Cemetery monuments often reflect the history, age and evolution of trends over time. These form a link to the past and reflect fluctuating prosperity, as well as changing traditions in stone masonry and religion. Monuments are a significant part of the make-up of the cemetery and are often seen to be an inherent part of council's maintenance responsibility. However, the **responsibility for maintenance of monuments lies with the interment right holder.**

There are two key considerations associated with monumentation:

- Ensuring that there is a clear understanding of responsibility between operator and rights holder
- Ensuring monuments remain safe, considering the general public's interaction with them.

Narrandera Shire Council does not currently conduct any structural assessment of monuments. This is mainly due both to recent changes in legislation and the skills and resources. The review identified that Council have a responsibility to ensure that monuments are designed and installed to meet appropriate standards and policies - most notably AS 4204:2019 Headstones and Cemetery Monuments and AS 4425:1996 Above Ground Burial Structures.

Ensuring appropriate standards are met will mean longer-term safety and a reduced need for interference with cemetery monuments in the future. The overarching principal identified in the Cemeteries & Crematoria NSW – Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance is to 'do as much as necessary, but as little as possible' that may impact on the significance on existing monuments.

Creating clear and consistent monumental requirements is important and should be detailed in the policy.

Safety testing monuments should include extensive community engagement before, during and after implementation. Monuments should be visually inspected, hand tested, and where necessary machine topple testing (as per AS-4204:2019). Records should be kept and testing repeated at least every five years or as necessary. Where concerns exist, inform interment right holders and lay down monuments in accordance with National Trust Guidelines, but only if they pose an imminent risk.

Observations and Assessment:

- Although maintenance of monuments lies with the interment right holder, the review group noted that this may not always be possible give the age of the monument and the number of generations that have passed since the interment.
- AS 4204:2019 Headstones and cemetery monuments and AS 4425:1996 Above ground burial structures.
- The review group identified that testing of monuments structural integrity is needed at least every five years. Staff currently do not have the skills or the resources to conduct testing.
- The policy should include a monument testing program to be conducted every five years.
- Clear and consistent monumental requirements is important and should be detailed in the policy.

- Safety testing monuments should include extensive community engagement before, during and after implementation

RECOMMENDATION 4

4.1: That Council reviews the Cemetery Management policy and include clear and consistent monumental requirements and also include a monument testing program to be conducted every five (5) years. Safety testing monuments to include extensive community engagement before, during and after implementation.

4.2: Council note that resources and staff do not have the skills or specialised training to carry out the training. The review group recommend that a consultant be engaged to undertake the monument testing as part of the masterplan and cemetery management system project.

5.4 Signage

Access into a cemetery is important to ensure effective use of the site for a range of user types, from those grieving to interment services vehicles such as hearses. Site entry areas need to cater to other access requirements, such as those of pedestrians and cyclists.

By using visual features such as trees, fencing and other entry markers, as well as keeping signs and entranceways consistent with their surroundings, cemetery entry areas can be a defining 'welcome zone', helping to establish the tone of the space from the outset and elevating the cemetery's importance in line with community values. The area has the practical objective of being a clear marker for visitors to find the cemetery access point/s and to orientate themselves upon entry.

Council has section signage at all three of the operation cemeteries along with a cemetery entrance sign just stating the name of each cemetery. The review group found that more signage along with row numbering would assist visitors and contractors

Observations and Assessment:

- Council currently does not have any overview cemetery signage to assist visitors.
- There is a need for cemetery entrance signage at each cemetery, both operational and non-operational. These signs should include an aerial view of each cemetery identifying key sites, individual sections, amenities and roads.
- These signs may also have a brief outline of the history of each cemetery.
- Row numbering in the general section of operational cemeteries should also be considered to assist visitors and contractors. This may lead to a decrease in requests for information.

6. ASSET MANAGEMENT

6.1 Policy

The review group identified the need for council to implement a cemetery management plan to complement the Cemetery management policy. The purpose of the management plan is to provide staff guidance with planning and operations, the management plan will ensure council is both the capable and has capacity to meet all the relevant industry regulations and standards.

Policy review. Refer to:

- Attachment 2: Cemetery Management Policy
- Attachment 3: Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance - Cemetery Maintenance Guide

The review group assessed the Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance - Cemetery maintenance guide (attachment 3) that had been provided by Cemeteries & Crematoria New South Wales (CCNSW).

CCNSW is a statutory body established in 2014 under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013*. CCNSW is led by an independent board (CCNSW Board) appointed by, and responsible to, the Minister for Water, Property and Housing.

The Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance, otherwise referred to as the Cemetery Maintenance Guide, was been developed to help cemetery operators to implement the Cemetery and Crematorium Operator Code of Practice for Interment Rights and General Services.

The Operator Code of Practice is regulated by CCNSW.

The Review group found that the Cemetery Maintenance Guide gives practical advice to assist staff to ensure that they can address Part 8 of the Operator Code relating to maintenance of facilities, graves, vaults, cemeteries and crematoria.

The Cemetery Maintenance Guide is designed to highlight best-practice principles and directions that can help operators establish and improve on their cemeteries over time and in line with community expectations and available resources.

The Cemetery Maintenance Guide will help the Council meet the relevant objects of the *Cemetery and Crematoria Act 2013* including those to:

- (a) recognise the right of all individuals to a dignified interment and treatment of their remains with dignity and respect
- (b) provide for the operation of a consistent and coherent regime for the governance and regulation of cemeteries and crematoria
- (c) ensure that the operators of cemeteries and crematoria demonstrate satisfactory levels of accountability, transparency and integrity
- (d) promote environmental sustainability of the interment industry, including provision for natural and private burials.

It should be noted that this document is a guide and is not designed to give comprehensive details about all issues associated with cemetery maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION 5

5.1: Council adopts the Cemetery Management policy

5.2: Council acknowledges the Voluntary Code of Practice for Cemetery Maintenance - Cemetery Maintenance Guide

6.2 Cemetery Records Management Systems and Programs

The review group has identified the need to purchase a specialised cemetery management system to map all interments, coordinate bookings, register reservations and provided accurate data for reporting and public information requests.

Council's current system is labour intensive and often needs to be crosschecked multiple times to ensure accuracy.

The review group investigated a number of software management systems that would be of great benefit to the cemetery operations. The review group focused on a system that had the capacity to comprehensively manage the operational, financial, compliance and mapping needs of council managed cemeteries. The cost of the systems ranges from \$10,000 - \$45,000 installation and \$100- \$2,000 per month.

Although the upfront costs may appear to be substantial, the saving made through efficiencies with reporting and public requests for information would be of greater value.

The review group identified the need for a consultant to assess historic records and cross check them with site surveys. The review group recommends that the purchase of the cemetery management system, the development of site-specific master plans and the analysis of records should all be conducted during the same project.

Observations and Assessment:

- Councils current cemetery operation and reporting system is extremely labour intensive. The review group identified the need for a specialised cemetery management system to be implemented as a priority.
- The system must have the capacity to comprehensively manage the operational, financial, compliance and mapping needs of the cemetery. The review group believes the system will instantly improve productivity and customer service along with protecting the historical records of the cemeteries.

6.3 Current Capacity and Expected Operational Life of Cemeteries

Through calculating the average interments over the past five years (table 2) and comparing the figure against the available plots (table 3) staff can estimate that the Narrandera lawn areas will reach capacity within 23.5 years.

Through the same process the review group estimated that the Barellan western lawn section will reach capacity between 16.5 years and 20 years given that second interments take place at the site.

The review group found that with the current records available the capacity calculation for the general sections was not able to be carried out for this review. The review team recommend a specialised consultant given the time needed to cross check the records.

Masterplans will require careful consideration to the future needs of cemeteries and include infrastructure requirements along with addressing all current standards including accessibility

Observations and Assessment:

- Narrandera lawn areas will reach capacity within 23.5 years.
- Barellan western lawn section will reach capacity between 16.5 years and 20 years
- The review group have identified the need for site specific master plans to address future extensions along with specific requests from the public including the following:
 - Sheltered areas
 - Disabled access
 - Remembrance areas
 - Car park (potential hay shed suite)
 - Unique monuments
 - Seating
 - Bins
 - Toilets and fencing

Recommendation 5

5.1: Council to explore options for the extensions of the Narrandera Cemetery and recommend that this should be explored through master planning with a consultant.

5.2: Council acknowledge the Barellan Lawn cemeteries forecasted capacity statement and support the concept of extending two lawn areas directly south of the existing lawn areas.

6.4 Future Planning - Perpetual Care

From a maintenance perspective, perpetual care requires ongoing consideration of long-term community needs for cemetery planning, as well as through the lifecycle stages of the cemetery.

At the current rate of interment, it is estimated that within 23.5 years the Narrandera Cemetery lawn cemetery will be capacity.

In order to ensure the Narrandera Cemetery remains operational, Council needs to carefully consider extending the cemetery. The extension should be investigated and documented in a masterplan, consideration to the full extent of area that can be used for cemetery purposes, including the potential number of interments that can catered for needs of the cemetery should be included to provide an accurate estimate life of the cemetery extensions.

Perpetual funds raised may reasonably be used for cemetery expansion, provided that long-term plans and associated costs are being considered/allowed for at the point at which the cemetery reaches its perpetual or forever phase.

Barellan western lawn section will reach capacity between 16.5 years and 20 years. The review group found that the current cemetery has the space to create two more lawn areas directly south of the existing lawn areas. Master plans should be used to identify the extensions along with any infrastructure requirements needed.

7. Conclusion

Cemetery services need to be delivered with dignity and respect. As public services they need to be provided at a fair price to the public and there is a community expectation that cemetery grounds will be adequately maintained. In providing these services, cemeteries need to comply with legislative requirements to ensure the health and safety of cemetery employees and the broader community.

Taking into consideration the evolution of the cemetery, funeral industry and local government's important role in the provision of services and facilities, the need to establish a long-term direction for the care, control and management of public cemeteries is recognised, as well as the ongoing expectations of procedural and operational improvements.

During the review process it was clear that the staff vested with operating the cemeteries take great pride and ownership of the services they are providing, often going above and beyond their position description to assist families at their time of need.

All cemetery operators are required to comply with the same legislation and reporting requirements. In order for Narrandera Shire Council to meet these legislative requirements and more importantly the reporting requirements, it is essential for Council to consider the recommendations within this report.

The review group acknowledged the need for additional staff and resources, but also understand that this might not be achievable given the current economic climate. The review group have taken the conservative approach in recommending that the need additional staff should be reassessed in line with the implementation of future master plans and the additional maintenance requirements that they will be associated with them.

The review group found that the Narrandera Shire Cemeteries are being managed to a high standard. Given the resources available, other areas of management within the OSR section are seeing a reduction in service level when there is an influx of internments. The introduction of software systems will have an immediate effect, ensuring historic records are preserved, improving customer service, and having instantaneous access to interment searches and reporting.

In considering the recommendations for this review, the review group emphasize the importance of committing long term funding and resources to carry out the actions predicted within the future master plans. This is essential to ensure masterplans are of value and are a working asset to council.