

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — CEMETERIES — KARRAKATTA

2570. Mr A. Krsticevic to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to the ongoing redevelopment and renewal of Karrakatta Cemetery, and ask:

- (a) is there a plan and/or time frame for the redevelopment of different areas of Karrakatta;
- (b) has there been a public education / information campaign to inform people about the redevelopment process? If so, please provide details;
- (c) what was the process for cemetery redevelopment before the commencement of the *Cemeteries Act 1986*;
- (d) what constitutes “disrepair” or “poor condition” of a headstone and who determines whether the damage is severe enough to warrant its destruction or whether it must be kept:
 - (i) are family members contacted to discuss the condition of headstones;
 - (ii) how much effort is expended in locating family members; and
 - (iii) if you are unable to locate a family member, what happens to the headstone? Does this process differ if the headstone is in good repair;
- (e) what is the criteria for destruction of a headstone which is in poor condition or disrepair;
- (f) What method is used to remove memorials /headstones which are in disrepair:
 - (i) have any alternative methods of removal been considered; and
 - (ii) if yes to (i), will these methods be implemented in the future, and if so, from what date; and
- (g) how are original burial sites in redevelopment areas physically marked, to enable family members to identify them and if there are no physical markings, is this matter being rectified and from what date will these sites be marked?

Mr D.A. Templeman replied:

- (a) Yes, there is a Renewal Schedule which is reviewed and updated by the Monumental Assessment and Advisory Committee (MAAC) annually. The schedule is reviewed if cemetery grave stock is at a level where further grave stock is required later or earlier than previously anticipated.
- (b) Information regarding Cemetery Renewal is distributed to the general public in a number of ways –
 - Cemetery Renewal brochures are available at Metropolitan Cemeteries Board (MCB) offices and digitally on the MCB website.
 - Cemetery Renewal is explained on the MCB website – with a link to the Cemetery Renewal brochure
 - Burial areas approaching Cemetery Renewal are flagged as such in the Cemetery Records System. The MCB website has a Name Search function for members of the public looking for their loved ones. Where loved ones are interred in areas approaching Cemetery Renewal, this information appears within the Name Search function.
 - Areas approaching Cemetery Renewal are marked on the Karrakatta Cemetery map.
 - At least 15 months prior to an area being renewed, families and interested parties are contacted in writing. In addition, large signs notifying the public of the MCB’s intentions to renew are placed within the area being renewed, as well as smaller signs placed at the foot of each monument. The MCB also places public notices in *The West Australian* advising the public approximately 15 months and then three months prior to the works taking place.
 - The MCB employs an officer whose primary role is to liaise with families regarding Cemetery Renewal.
- (c) Prior to the *Cemeteries Act 1986*, there was no formal process. However, some areas where there were very few headstones in place (i.e. unmarked graves) were developed and transformed into landscaped gardens for cremation memorials. These gardens feature retained headstones throughout and ensured that Karrakatta was able to meet what was a growing need for cremation memorial gardens.
- (d) It is not the MCB’s current practice to destroy monuments. The Cemetery Renewal process has evolved over the years. An independent committee – MAAC – assesses each monument prior to Cemetery Renewal. Previously, if a monument was broken or less than 50% legible, families who could be contacted would be given the option to collect or refurbish the monument for relocation within the cemetery. More

recently, the MCB has made a commitment to retain – either in situ or within the burial area – all monuments. Rare exceptions to this would be if the monument crumbles prior to, or during, relocation. In these instances, if the family can't be contacted to advise their wishes for the monument, the MCB will replace the monument with a memorial plaque.

- (i) Yes. Grant holders, registered family members and any interested parties are contacted by mail prior to Cemetery Renewal to discuss the MAAC assessment plan for each headstone. That is assuming that they have maintained up to date contact details. Signage in burial areas (within the section and on the physical plot) is in-place for a minimum of 12 months to increase the likelihood of the MCB making contact with Grant holders and family members on traditional days for visitation (e.g. Mother's Day, Christmas, dates of personal importance).
- (ii) Grant holders are encouraged to maintain their contact details with the cemetery and the MCB allows family members to register multiple contacts for each plot.

Every time a member of the public conducts a Name Search on the MCB website, a link is provided to update their contact details. Both the Cemetery Renewal brochure and the Cemetery Renewal information page on the MCB website encourages families to keep their contact details up-to-date.

When preparing a contact database prior to writing to families, the MCB includes all possible contacts in relation to the grave dating back 25 years.
- (iii) The headstone is assessed in the same manner whether or not the family can be located. There is no difference in the process whether there is a family contact or not.
- (e) MAAC assesses each monument prior to Cemetery Renewal. Severely deteriorated monuments (e.g. crumbling or worn) and monuments that are a hazard are removed for the safety of visitors and staff. All headstones that are not assessed to remain in situ and can be safely relocated are placed within the renewed area in landscaped garden environments.
- (f) Small and delicate headstones are lifted by hand; large monuments are relocated using machinery by a contractor, under supervision by cemetery staff.
 - (i) The current methods used are appropriate for the task.
 - (ii) Not applicable.
- (g) Unless the headstone is retained in situ the original burial site is not physically marked. The location of the original gravesite is recorded on the cemetery register, listed in a Book of Remembrance and can be located by the use of burial maps which are available to visitors. The cemetery staff is also available to assist families if they are having difficulty locating the exact location.

Physically marking the location of each and every headstone that was previously in-situ is not possible.