

POLICY PURPOSE

To ensure the efficient and empathetic administration of burials and exhumations at public cemeteries within the Municipality of Alice Springs.

POLICY STATEMENT

Council, acting with the powers of a Board of Trustees for each of the public cemeteries within the Municipality, delegates its powers and functions to an officer of Council at Director level, who shall assume the administrative title of Curator of Public Cemeteries, along with all of the powers and functions of the Board of Trustees.

The Curator of Public Cemeteries will ensure that the administration of the burial process for each of the public cemeteries within the Municipality accords with the relevant legislation at all times.

The Curator of Public Cemeteries will administer the operation of all public cemeteries, including allocating burial plots, arranging grave digging, overseeing burials and keeping burial records.

The Curator of Public Cemeteries may grant a licence to a person who is not an undertaker to undertake in a public cemetery the funeral of a relative of the person or the funeral of another person with whom the Curator is satisfied the person had a close association.

Council prohibits, except under licence granted by the Curator of Public Cemeteries, the undertaking of funerals, and the acceptance of fees for the undertaking of funerals, at all public cemeteries within the Municipality.

The fees and charges incidental to undertaking a funeral at a public cemetery within the Municipality are contained in the Alice Springs Town Council Municipal Plan (as amended from time to time).

A person shall not bury the body of a deceased person anywhere within the Municipality except in a public cemetery.

Burials at closed cemeteries will only be carried out in accordance with the conditions attached to any notice of closure gazetted by the Minister for Local Government.

A person shall not bury the body of a deceased person during the time between sunset on any day and sunrise on the next succeeding day.

A person shall not bury the body of a deceased person otherwise than in the manner prescribed.

A person shall not bury the body of a deceased person otherwise than in the place directed by the Curator or, another officer or agent of Council, under instruction by the Curator.

A person shall not, whether directly or indirectly, obstruct or hinder the performance of a burial ceremony in a public cemetery, except in accordance with the *Cemeteries Act*.

Exhumation and removal of remains from a public cemetery shall only occur in accordance with a written instrument of consent issued by the Minister for Local Government.

Refer to attached document "Cemetery Procedures – Burials and Exhumations" that supports this policy (Appendix A).

Cemetery Procedures – Burials and Exhumations

PROCEDURAL STATEMENT

(to be read in conjunction with Council Policy 401)

1. The Curator of Public Cemeteries shall supply and affix a standard commemorative plaque (approximately 230mm x 100mm) to the module headstone of each grave and the cost of the plaque shall be included as part of the cost of burial.
2. An alternative memorial plaque may be approved by the Curator of Public Cemeteries at the time of burial, or any time thereafter, provided that it:
 - a) contains the following details: name(s) of deceased; date of birth; and date of death;
 - b) is constructed of a durable and permanent type of material, preferably metal; and
 - c) is capable of being affixed to the module headstone within the inset area allowed on each headstone and without protruding in any direction beyond the inset area.
3. An alternative headstone may be approved by the Curator of Public Cemeteries provided that it:
 - a) contains the following details: name(s) of deceased; date of birth; and date of death;
 - b) is constructed of a permanent type of material, preferably stone or concrete; and
 - c) has an adequate foundation and, if single, is not more than one metre in height, and remains within the same alignment as the standard module concrete blocks (maximum height of 0.9 m); and if double, is not more than one metre in height and remains within the same alignment as that of the combined module concrete blocks (maximum width of 1.85 m)
4. The Curator of Public Cemeteries may issue exclusive rights of burial for double graves.
5. All graves and reserved plots are to be issued with an Exclusive Right of Burial Certificate by the Curator of Public Cemeteries. The Curator of Public Cemeteries requires full payment of the plot fee, as declared under the Municipal Plan, at the time the Exclusive Right of Burial Certificate is issued.
6. The Curator of Public Cemeteries shall cause a Cemetery Register to be kept for each public cemetery which shall include the details of all deceased persons, including any still-born child.

Administration

1. Licensing of Funeral Directors is an annual fee, declared under the Municipal Plan, that allows a Licensed Funeral Director to undertake funerals in a public cemetery – \$10 payable to Council.
2. The Curator of Public Cemeteries may issue an exclusive right of burial (i.e. reserve a plot) (see Cemetery Regulations - Form 2) information recorded in a cemetery register (or database).
3. The Curator of Public Cemeteries shall cause a “reserved” plaque to be placed upon any plot for which an exclusive right of burial has been issued to indicate the status of that plot.

4. Notice of interment (Cemetery Regulations - Form 1) lodged with the Curator of Public Cemeteries (or delegate).
5. Death certificate/coroners certificate sighted and noted by the Curator of Public Cemeteries (or delegate) on the notice of interment.
6. Exclusive Right of Burial Certificate is sighted by the Curator of Public Cemeteries (or delegate) and noted on the notice of interment.
7. The Curator of Public Cemeteries (or delegate) issues a burial permit - no burial shall take place in a public cemetery unless a burial permit has been obtained.
8. The Curator of Public Cemeteries (or delegate) ensures that the plot number is recorded on the burial permit and in the cemetery register (or database) before the burial process is complete
9. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall ensure that a standard bronze plaque including name, date of birth and date of death is placed on order from the manufacturer once per month with all burials during the previous month included on the order (note: the cost of a standard bronze plaque is included in the burial costs).
10. The manufactured plaques are to be delivered to the Civic Centre, at which time the Cemeteries Caretaker shall be notified, whereupon a Technical Services staff member will deliver the plaque to the cemetery for checking against the burial records before being affixed to the headstone.
11. Council invoices the Licensed Funeral Director, or appropriately authorized person (if arranging for the interment of ashes), for costs associated with a burial process (note: Council fees and charges are listed in the Municipal Plan).

Burial

1. The Curator of Public Cemeteries has control and management of the digging of all graves at any public cemetery in Alice Springs.
2. A Notice of interment email is sent by a Licensed Funeral Director to the Cemeteries Caretaker in the "Garden Cemetery" email inbox (note: a minimum of two working days notice is required before the burial).
3. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall determine if the burial is to be in a previously reserved (exclusive right of burial) plot, mainstream plot (unreserved) or niche wall (reserved or unreserved).
4. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall be responsible for digging the grave to the required depth (i.e. no less than 5 feet deep for a child less than eight years old and no less than 6 feet deep if eight years or older at the time of death).
5. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall ensure that all adult graves shall be excavated to accommodate double burials (i.e. minimum depth of 2.4 m).
6. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall ensure that adequate shoring is in place.
7. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall ensure that a lowering device is emplaced along with shade structures and seating, etc.
8. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall update burial records at cemetery and inform the Curator of Public Cemeteries (or delegate) of the plot number for cross-checking in the cemeteries register.
9. Funeral service and/or burial takes place graveside.

10. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall ensure that mourners move away from the graveside before the lowering device is dismantled, shade structure and chairs removed, etc.
11. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall backfill the grave and place flowers on top;
12. The Cemeteries Caretaker monitors any subsidence (settling-in) of the grave (note: reinstatement to ground level is a Council maintenance process undertaken by the Cemeteries Caretaker).

Exhumation

1. A Licensed Funeral Director, or other appropriately authorised person, applies to the Minister for Local Government for authorisation to exhume a body from a public cemetery in Alice Springs.
2. The Minister for Local Government may authorise the exhumation in writing.
3. The Licensed Funeral Director, or other appropriately authorised person, gives notice of intention to exhume a body from a public cemetery in Alice Springs to the Curator of Public Cemeteries.
4. The Licensed Funeral Director, or other appropriately authorised person, notifies the Cemeteries Caretaker of intention to exhume a body from a public cemetery in Alice Springs.
5. The Cemeteries Caretaker checks with the Curator of Public Cemeteries that the Licensed Funeral Director is appropriately authorised by the Minister for Local Government.
6. The Cemeteries Caretaker checks details of the deceased and cross-correlates with the cemetery register (or database) and the burial records and double checks the on-ground location.
7. The Cemeteries Caretaker shall ensure any exhumation guidelines are applied (note: Chief Health Officer may issue guidelines).
8. The Cemeteries Caretaker organises a date and time for exhumation with relevant parties (e.g. licensed funeral director, Department of Health and Families, NT Police, etc.).
9. The Cemeteries Caretaker awaits arrival of relevant and appropriately authorised persons before digging the grave down to top of the coffin, then places shoring in the grave;
10. Licensed Funeral Director, or other appropriately authorised person, enters the grave and removes the remains of the deceased and places them in an appropriate receptacle for transport;
11. Licensed Funeral Director, or other appropriately authorised person, signs "receipt of body" in burial records book at the cemetery;
12. The Cemeteries Caretaker ensures that the grave is backfilled as soon as possible;
13. The Cemeteries Caretaker updates burial records at the cemetery;
14. The Cemeteries Caretaker informs the Curator of Public Cemeteries (or delegate) who then ensures that the details of the exhumation are entered into the cemetery register (or database).