

# Beechworth Cemetery Trust Strategic Plan

2024-2029



## **Abstract:**

The Beechworth Cemetery Trust Strategic Plan has been developed to manage and prioritise the complex functions the Beechworth Cemetery Trust provides to both the local and wider community.

# Introduction from the Chair

This Strategic Plan 2024-2029 is designed to build on the previous five-year Strategic Plan 2019-2024 which was developed in 2019 with the support from an external facilitator Mach 2, the then Trust Chairman, Robert Scott, Trust members, and community consultation.

The insights from the collaboration from this group produced a document that had the vision, ideals and action plans for the cemetery for the next five years. It portrayed a sound business plan for the cemetery with processes, procedures, and steps for the Cemetery Trust to follow to maintain an historical, heritage listed cemetery.

In this next strategic phase, it is anticipated that further asset development and infrastructural improvements and maintenance will be undertaken to continue to build on the cemetery's original planned layout and parklike appearance.

Maintaining a Grade B, historical, heritage listed cemetery the size of the Beechworth Public Cemetery with the aid of volunteer Trust members is not easy. The Cemetery attracts no funding from Indigo Shire or the Department of Health. The only financial means are from burials, plot reservations and monument permits. Additional funds for large projects such as roadworks, fountain restoration, and website are sourced through grants, as the cost involved is beyond the cemetery's financial ability.

There are numerous responsibilities and expectations imposed on the Cemetery Trust from the Department of Health - Cemeteries Sector, the Cemeteries and Crematorium Act and the community. Keeping abreast of the changing legal rules, community attitudes, and trends to burials is a challenge for the Trust. Once while body burials were the preferred mode of interment, now cremations are more common, particularly into established family graves.

During the shutdowns due to COVID 19, many families used the time to conduct family research. This highlighted some anomalies with the historical records and the new Chronicle mapping system. This is a continual challenge as more errors are revealed. Over time this will slowly be rectified with individual Trust members' diligence, experience, knowledge, and skills.

Being the caretakers of this cemetery can often be a burden, but also a joy, especially when positive comments are passed on from visitors and families. Moving into the next five years the aim is to continue and build on this positivity.

Many thanks to all the current Trust members for their support and commitment to their role as custodians of a very special cemetery.

*Rosemary Barnett*

Chairperson

Beechworth Cemetery Trust

July 2024

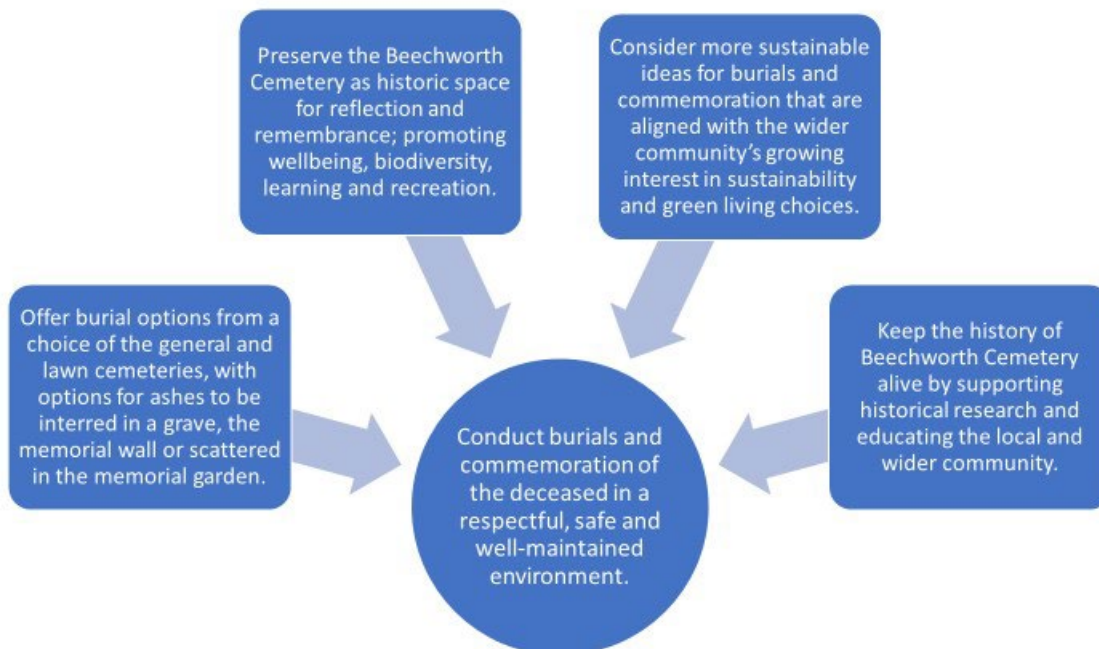
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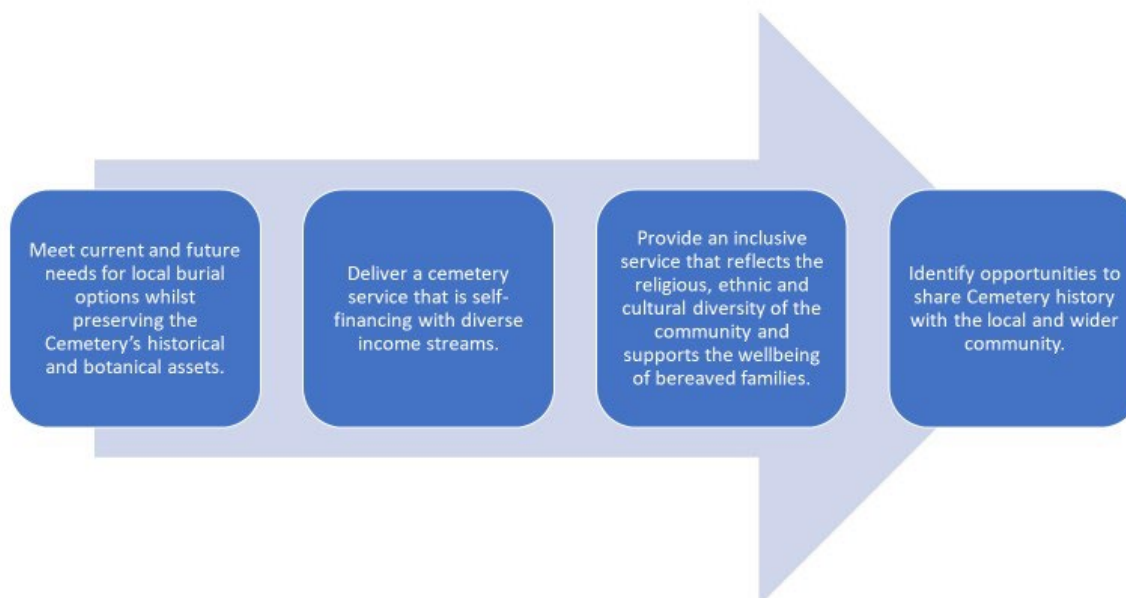
# Section 1: Background

## 1. Vision and Objectives

The Vision of the Beechworth Public Cemetery Strategic Plan is to meet the needs of bereaved families and the local and wider community through the following key directions:



The Objectives of the Beechworth Public Cemetery Strategic Plan are to:



## 2. Executive Summary

The 2024-2029 strategic plan for the Beechworth Cemetery Trust replaces the previous strategic plan from 2019-2024, identifying some key issues that have emerged for the Cemetery Trust that require a different type of thinking. This strategic plan builds on the previous established business model that supports the development and implementation of growth opportunities and creates long term viability for the Beechworth Cemetery. This continual plan will be achieved through the delivery of several initiatives including the ongoing review of product pricing, introduction of alternative revenue streams and ongoing research into emerging trends and their impact on Beechworth Public Cemetery.

The following areas with the key themes were highlighted as challenges and opportunities in the 2019-2024 strategic plan and have now been addressed in line with this strategic plan. Further development and additional challenges now impact on the Beechworth Public Cemetery and will be outlined further in this summary.

Areas identified as key areas of development in the 2019-2024 strategic plan were:

**Review of Product Pricing:** A review and update of cemetery charges was last conducted in 2017. At the time, an increase of around ten per cent was made to the pricing structure. It is recommended that the current price structure is reviewed, adding ten per cent to all Beechworth Cemetery charges. Incorporating a range of additional revenue streams is also an increasing trend in many cemeteries.

**Action:** In August 2021 the Cemetery Trust applied to the Department of Health for an increase of approximately ten percent on the then cemetery fees. This was granted and a fee increase was advertised in September 2021.

**Records Management:** A project to digitise Beechworth Public Cemetery records and offer a deceased search option on the Beechworth Public Cemetery website is currently underway. This will assist in the preservation of historical burial registers, improve records accessibility as well as legislative compliance. It will also reduce demand on the Secretary for assistance with ancestry research, as initial enquiries can be conducted via the website.

**Action:** This digitised online system was developed with Chronicle and has assisted with the search of locations of graves for families, funeral directors, monument stonemasons and the Cemetery Trust. The system has been attached to the cemetery website for easy reference.

**Financial System:** The establishment of an operational budget will increase the long-term effectiveness of financial reporting and data management. This will enable the Trust to focus on scheduling asset management improvements and creating new income streams to help balance the costs of ongoing maintenance and major works. Some changes to the Trust structure may help develop the financial capacity of the Trust, for example refining the Secretary's role and ensuring the Treasurer's role is filled.

**Action:** A Treasurer's role was established within the Trust structure which has improved the financial management of the cemetery funds. The role of secretary was removed as a paid position as it was draining cemetery funds especially at quiet times. The role of secretary is currently a dual one with the chairperson. This is not sustainable in the future and will need to be reviewed yearly.

**Growth and capacity:** Understanding the capacity of the cemetery and its future needs is critical to sustainability. According to Victorian population statistics there are around twenty-five deaths per annum within the township of Beechworth. The thirty-four interments annually can perhaps be attributed to a few factors; the higher-than-average aging population, the number of non-residents returning to where their families originate from to be buried or simply a desire for non-residents to be buried somewhere beautiful and historic like Beechworth Public Cemetery. Without any dramatic change in practice and at current levels of demand, the Beechworth Public Cemetery is projected to run out of burial space in approximately sixty years. It is unlikely that the burial rate will increase markedly over time, so the income generated from burials is likely to remain stable.

**Action:** The burial rate has remained constant with a slight increase in cremations due to the COVID 19 outbreak. New areas in the headstone section of the Lawn Cemetery will be developed in 2024, with the plan to develop the 'Paddock' area later in the 2024-2029 strategic plan.

**Innovation:** As with any industry, the Trust need to understand the changing needs of the community and the ways that they can respond to new demands. This includes changing interest in burials (e.g. green burials, memorial ash gardens) and the newly developing market in more natural memorialisation products. In line with this, the Beechworth Public Cemetery Survey (2019) indicated that over eighty per cent of respondents expressed an interest in natural, or green, burials. In recent years, a growing interest in ancestry has led to a greater interest in cemeteries generally, along with the desire to access historical information online and using digital tools. The incredibly rich and varied history of Beechworth Public Cemetery means it is perfectly placed to take advantage of this interest by providing tours, information and experiences that respond to changing expectations.

**Action:** The cemetery has had no requests for 'green' burials during the life of the 2019-2024 strategic plan. More research and planning is required for an area to be established for 'green' burials in the future. A self-guided historical tour has been developed with new brochures and the tour placed on the website. This removes the need for volunteers to physically take tours.

**Cemetery Trust Capacity Building:** As with many community organisations, the Trust is experiencing a decline in its capacity, which can largely be attributed to retirement of several long-term Trust members. The Beechworth Cemetery Survey (2019) attracted several expressions of interest in Trust membership, perhaps indicating there is interest if people are asked. While there is undoubtedly a need for replacement of retired Trust members, there is equally a need to develop and improve the capacity and structure of the Trust in ways that support its sustainability and effectiveness. This includes the introduction of subcommittees or portfolios to distribute the workload more evenly and utilise the specialist skills of Trust members. Similarly, there is a need to focus on how the Trust continues to manage the complex but highly effective array of 'adjunct' relationships that are voluntary by nature, including the stonemasonry and historical research projects. The timing is right for the establishment of a 'Friends of Beechworth Public Cemetery' group that can support the range of work that is already being undertaken by the many volunteers, as well as creating the space for new ideas to emerge.

**Action:** The cemetery trust is still working on establishing a 'Friends of Beechworth Public Cemetery' group. Due to the restrictions of COVID 19 this was placed on hold and plans are that it will be developed with the 2024-2029 strategic plan.

**Environmental Considerations:** Climate change will continue to necessitate new approaches to the landscape and operations of the Beechworth Cemetery. The extremes in weather patterns will increasingly impact on the maintenance of lawn and garden areas,

which are likely to require different management approaches. Long periods of dry, hot weather will continue to impact on the stability of monuments and the survival of significant trees, imposing an economic cost with increased watering regimes. Heavy rain causes 'grave sinking', creating uneven ground that poses a safety risk to cemetery visitors as well as requiring maintenance. Increasing water restrictions may require changes in watering practices and necessitate new irrigation systems that are more targeted to vegetation types.

Greater frequency of high fire danger days will also impact on operations at the Cemetery, particularly in the case of Code Red Days, which may impact on burial services and contractors. It is likely that a new policy will need to be developed to help the Trust respond to some of these operational impacts.

Many cemeteries have relied on herbicides to control the growth of grass around memorials; there is now an imperative to consider greener grounds maintenance practices in the cemetery. These include minimising herbicides or pesticides, composting green waste, recycling topsoil excavated from graves and old memorials, actively managing trees to encourage healthy growth, and planting new trees to fit with the landscape design while also providing habitat for wildlife.

**Action:** A 'green' maintenance program has been applied to the cemetery grounds with minimum herbicide sprays used. The Lawn Cemetery has a new watering system to maintain the lawns. Graves are regularly checked for sinkage and topped up when necessary. A botanicals audit has been conducted for tree health.

### 3. The Beechworth Cemetery Trust

The Department of Health (DH) is responsible for the administration of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act (2003). As a public entity, cemetery trusts are subject to a range of legislative and compliance requirements under the Public Administration Act (2004) and other Victorian legislation, which is designed to ensure appropriate governance and accountability.

As with all public entities, cemetery trusts are controlled by a statutory board of members appointed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Minister for Health under section six of the Act.

Beechworth Cemetery Trust is classified as a Class B cemetery trust, which must consist of between three and eleven members. Cemetery trust members are appointed for a five-year term and are eligible for reappointment.

Cemetery trust boards serve the community by providing cemetery services and maintaining public cemeteries. They are ultimately accountable to the Minister for Health and are responsible for the conduct and performance of the cemetery trust entity.

The function of the cemetery trust board is to steer the cemetery trust, which includes:

- A strategic role in setting the overall operational direction of the cemetery trust.
- A stewardship role in ensuring that the cemetery trust's activities reflect public sector values.
- Adherence to employment principles, to ensure the cemetery trust has arrangements in place to meet its statutory obligations.

### 4. The Beechworth Public Cemetery

Beechworth Public Cemetery has over seventeen thousand recorded burials within its confines. Of this number, around ten thousand of these interments are in unmarked plots without burial recognition. Approximately six thousand burials are from former local institutions, with the vast majority of these interred in unmarked plots.

Listed with both the Heritage Council of Victoria for its significance as a Goldfields Cemetery and the National Trust Register, the Beechworth Public Cemetery is of historical, scientific (botanical) and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria and its people.

It was first surveyed in February 1854 by the Government Surveyor under the supervision of James Ingram and divided into rectangular denominational compartments. In 1856, a Cemetery Trust was formed, and the cemetery was in operation in January the same year. The site was first gazetted as a public cemetery on 4 November 1861. Some early burials in the new Beechworth Public Cemetery were of bodies exhumed in 1857 from the earlier cemetery which had operated in Loch Street from 1853-55, many of which are now commemorated in a memorial garden to the pioneers situated at the rear of the Beechworth Public Cemetery on the north-eastern boundary.

The Beechworth Public Cemetery is of State significance for several reasons:

- As an early example in Victoria of a cemetery influenced by Romantic and Picturesque ideals which gained worldwide popularity in the early to mid-nineteenth century.
- For its collection of trees and plants: these are typical of nineteenth century cemeteries in Victoria, demonstrate strong associational links with their cemetery setting, include a rare collection of indigenous plants and several outstanding individual trees.
- Its strong link with the Chinese community demonstrated by the large number of burials (many still marked by footstones) and the Chinese Burning Towers.
- The collection of buildings and structures, including representative examples of typical features such as entrance gates, fencing, rotunda and headstones as well as highly distinctive and unusual features such as the fountain and Chinese Burning Towers.
- For its considerable aesthetic appeal derived from mature trees and shrubs, the large number of flowering plants (especially bulbs), undulating site, strong architectural elements, sense of enclosure, and vistas.
- The strong historical and social links with the township of Beechworth; exemplified by its early date of development, its long continuity of use for its original purpose, its links with early history and the urban development of the town, and its prominent part in Beechworth life and society. This includes the significant links with former institutions, including Ovens and Murray Benevolent Home and the Beechworth Lunatic Asylum.

## 5. Emerging Trends for Cemetery Trusts

Historically, cemetery trusts may have seen their role as starting and finishing with a burial; that is to say, their work was primarily concerned with the aftermath of the death of a loved one. However, shifts in social demographics and community expectations are highlighting the need for cemetery trusts to engage with new thinking and emerging challenges. These changes include:

**Climate change** will continue to necessitate an increased focus on the landscape and operation of Beechworth Public Cemetery. The ongoing variation in weather patterns will increasingly impact on the planning associated with the maintenance of lawn and garden areas to meet the needs and expectations of the community into the future. Climatic changes such as long periods of dry, hot weather will continue to impact on older monuments, the survival of significant trees and impose an economic cost with increased watering regimes.

At an operational level, climate change will necessitate new approaches to the landscape and operations of the Cemetery. The extremes in weather patterns will increasingly impact on the maintenance of lawn and garden areas, which are likely to require different management approaches. Long periods of dry, hot weather will continue to impact on the stability of monuments and the survival of significant trees, imposing an economic cost with increased watering regimes. Heavy rain causes 'grave sinking', creating uneven ground that poses a safety risk to cemetery visitors as well as requiring maintenance. Increasing water restrictions may require changes in watering practices and necessitate new irrigation systems that are more targeted to vegetation types.

Greater frequency of high fire danger days will also impact on operations at all cemeteries, particularly in the case of Code Red Days, which may impact on burial services and contractors. It is likely that cemeteries will need to develop new policies to help them respond to some of these climate-related operational impacts.

**Changes in Technology** will continue to create opportunities to capitalise on increased digital literacy across different generations. Community expectations of cemeteries has shifted to a greater demand for online ancestry and memorial services information and mausolea products, either through the web or specifically at the internment site. Cemeteries are responding to this by the widespread adoption of



digitised records by cemetery trusts, greater services being provided through web-based resources, development of apps to be used as virtual guides in cemeteries and the sharing of stories through podcasts and other social media platforms.

**Ancestry Research** has exploded in recent years, leading to a growth of interest in cemeteries and cemetery tourism. The incredibly rich and varied history of Beechworth Public Cemetery means it is perfectly placed to take advantage of this interest by providing tours and other types of information to cemetery visitors.

**Environmental considerations** have become a higher priority for much of the community, along with a growing awareness of how environmental footprint impacts end of life decisions. Beechworth Public Cemetery must be future focused to ensure services are aligned with increasingly 'green' customer expectations. This includes greater interest in green funerals that use biodegradable shrouds or caskets (or biodegradable capsules with tree seeds), creation of areas of native vegetation that align to environmental sensibilities and a desire for death management that excludes, or minimises, chemical applications (e.g. embalming).

**After-life care** is often a reactive consideration for individuals and families and can involve significant stress for families grappling with after-life choices during emotional times. Many cemetery trusts are advocating for and establishing more active relationships within the community to facilitate more open discussion on after-life care and remembrance. While the Beechworth Cemetery Trust does not provide counselling or bereavement support, it can play an important role in supporting and referring to services that offer greater support to individuals and families in responding to death and dying.

## Section II: Strategic Priorities

### 6. Interments

Strategic direction 1: Establish a memorial ashes garden.

Strategic direction 2: Research and Plan for an extension of the cemetery in the 'Paddock' area.

Strategic direction 3: Research and Plan for a new natural burial area.

Strategic direction 4: Investigate monuments for unmarked graves such as Fiddes.

Interments continue to be the core business of the Beechworth Cemetery, with approximately thirty-four interments per annum. The Victorian population statistics indicate that Beechworth has around twenty-five deaths per annum; Beechworth's higher interments could be largely attributed to an aging population, combined with a trend for non-residents returning to where their families originate to be buried - or simply a desire for non-residents to be buried somewhere beautiful and historic like the Beechworth Cemetery.

Of the thirty-four interments, approximately twenty have pre-paid reservations per annum, which indicates that around seventy per cent of people pre-plan their own burial.

Without any dramatic change in practice and at current levels of demand, the Beechworth Public Cemetery is projected to run out of existing burial space in roughly sixty or so years. While there is no immediate urgency to expand burial space, there are demographic changes that may need to be accounted for, which are likely to impact on continuing burial numbers. These include an increasing worldwide trend towards cremations rather than burials, the desire for ashes to be scattered in places of natural beauty (rather than interred) and the demand for greater environmental accountability in the funeral industry- and beyond.

In 2011, approximately three acres of land along Sydney Road was surveyed and found suitable for future use as part of the expanded Cemetery. This included a recommendation that the smaller area to

the south, off Balaclava Road, could be used for shedding and storage of materials e.g. mulch, soil, and gravel. The report also recommended that new sections be developed, including an ashes memorial garden, an option for future expansion of the traditional graves section, and a green burials section. There was also a recognition that new ethnic and cultural groups, such as Muslims and Sikhs, were increasingly becoming part of the community and their burial needs would need to be considered in the future.

### **i. Memorial ashes garden**

While there is currently an ashes garden in the general cemetery, it is not well utilised and currently contains only four urns and one scattering of ashes. It has one reservation. There are plans for further landscaping of this area, as well as extending the lawn into the children's area. Currently, it is quite a damp area in the cemetery that is not conducive to growing flowers, or for example, a rose garden.

The Beechworth Public Cemetery Survey (2019) indicated around thirty per cent of respondents supported the idea of creating a remembrance garden. It is likely that this would be well aligned to redevelop the current memorial garden area.

### **ii. Traditional burials**

The main sections of the Beechworth Public Cemetery include:

- general cemetery (seventeen burials per annum);
- lawn cemetery (nine burials per annum);
- memorial wall (three burials per annum);
- ashes interred into existing graves (five burials per annum).

In 2019, around half of the new interments were in the general cemetery, with the remaining distributed between the lawn cemetery and the memorial wall. This trend has changed over the past 5 years and the lawn cemetery is now more popular than the general cemetery for burials and cremations. The reasons for this shift include burial sites in general cemetery are no longer available, cost effectiveness, the ease of ongoing maintenance and access to the graveside, perhaps encouraged by the public perception that cremations are more environmentally friendly than burials. There is also an increasing trend towards graveside services rather than a church service.

There is unlikely to be any significant growth in demand for the general cemetery as only reserved or reopened graves are now available due to significant historical occupied unmarked gravesites.

### **iii. Natural burials**

A natural burial (also known as a 'green burial') is a burial that seeks to make as little impact upon the environment as possible. For most of human history, what we now call natural burial was just called a 'burial'; a simple, shallow hole dug into the earth, and the shrouded dead body placed into the hole. However, in many modernised areas of the world, cemeteries require the body be placed in a metal or wooden casket, then placed in a concrete or metal vault. The earth is not in direct contact with the dead body.

In a natural burial, the body is placed in a coffin made from materials that readily biodegrade or wrapped in a shroud, with the idea that the body will rapidly break down into organic matter and return to the earth.

In Australia, Europe, and the USA, having a natural burial is growing in popularity as it is seen as a way to leave the world with minimal impact to the environment. Studies have shown that natural burials reduce the carbon footprint of a burial significantly. Other reasons for its growing popularity include less use of toxic chemicals, less land requirement, lower ongoing maintenance, and less demand for materials for coffin production.

A small number of cemeteries in Victoria already offer natural burials, primarily metropolitan, with a growing number currently developing their capacity for natural burial as a response to worldwide trends.

Anecdotally at least, it is worth mentioning that a natural burial is one that is reported to be closely aligned to the way that many different (non-Western) cultures around the world engage with the rituals and processes around burying deceased members of the family. This is worth considering in light of changing cultural demographics in the community, and the need for greater cultural sensitivity around death.

The Beechworth Public Cemetery Survey (2019) indicated that around eighty per cent of survey respondents expressed an interest in having green burial options at the Beechworth Public Cemetery. This positive response, in conjunction with worldwide trends, presents a solid foundation for Beechworth Cemetery Trust to begin planning for green burials in the future. To date (2024) there has been no requests from the community for a green burial in the Beechworth Public Cemetery.

#### **iv. Monuments for unmarked graves of significance**

During an audit of the cemetery by the Trust in 2023, several unmarked graves of early significant pioneers were discovered. The Trust wish to acknowledge the achievements of these early Beechworth settlers by placing small commemorative monuments on their graves.

## **7. Infrastructure**

Strategic direction 1: Research restoration required for the Chinese Burning Towers.

Strategic direction 2: Research restoration required for the Rotunda.

Strategic direction 3: Research and plan an Information board, brochures, and donation box.

Strategic direction 4: Research and plan to replace toilet block (may incorporate undercover shelter)

Strategic direction 5: Redesign signage for cemetery.

Strategic direction 6: Research and plan for an office.

Strategic direction 7: Research and plan for installing solar and battery-operated machinery.

There are several assets within the Beechworth Public Cemetery with important historical significance. The Victorian Heritage Database advises that the facility is the best example of a 'Garden Cemetery' in Victoria along with it being considered as the best example of a Victorian 'Goldfields Cemetery' still in use.

Due to the age of much of the Beechworth Public Cemetery infrastructure, there is a perpetual need for maintenance, repair, restoration and in some cases, replacement.

The assets have been divided below into Historical Assets, Cemetery Infrastructure and Botanical Features. Most are existing although some proposed structures are also included.

### **I. Historical Assets**

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Historical value</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Fountain	Manufactured by Messrs. Dank and Co. of Melbourne, the Turkish-style fountain was installed in 1900.	Scheduled for 2020. Replacement of irrigation system and fountain restoration. Currently under restoration with DEECA grant.
Chinese Burning Towers	Constructed in 1857 and used for burning paper prayers and money; meals left at the altar for the dead. The altar was constructed in 1883.	No scheduled works.

Chinese graves	An unconfirmed number of Chinese gold seekers and settlers are buried in the Chinese section of the cemetery. (Previously suggested to be 2,000, a figure considered highly inaccurate due to the preference of returning ashes to the homeland)	No scheduled works.
Granite entrance posts with ornate iron screen gates	Erected in 1888.	No scheduled works.
Historic Monuments	Voluntary program of repair and restoration of historic monuments.	Ongoing program of repair and restoration conducted by Reinhard and Annette Beissbarth under Trust supervision.
Rotunda	The large octagonal rotunda located in the centre of the cemetery was constructed in 1897. Restoration works completed in 2016.	Requires restoration due to white ants.

## II. Cemetery Infrastructure

Item	Description	Priority
Toilet	The current toilet facility is inadequate for cemetery visitors and has no disabled access. It has been recognised as requiring urgent replacement for some time.	Replacement was scheduled for 2020. Now in 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.
Roads and paths	The state of the internal roads and paths requires ongoing management due to the impact of heavy rain events. Uneven surfaces present risks for patrons of the Cemetery.	No scheduled works as this was attended to in 2023 with a Department of Health grant.
Signage	Suggestions have been made over time to create a more consistent approach to signage within the Cemetery.	Scheduled for planning/implementation 2021-2023. Now 2024-2029.
Undercover area with seating	There is a need for a covered area that includes seating/tables, information board, brochures, and donations box to create an information hub for visitors, and protection from inclement weather.	Scheduled for 2020/2021 if it can be integrated with the proposed toilet facility. Trust members to discuss further in 2024-2029.

Cemetery Office	There is a need for a secure office to be at the cemetery. There is no where to meet families, visitors, contractors, and hold meetings. Storage of cemetery records, etc are kept in volunteers' homes.	To research, discuss and plan for 2024-2029.
Solar power and battery-operated machinery.	There is a need to establish a bank of solar panels with a storage battery to store power, as there is no electricity to the cemetery site. The ride-on-mower and other gardening equipment will eventually need to be replaced by environmentally friendly machinery.	To research, discuss and plan for 2024-2029.

### III. Botanical Features

Item	Description	Priority
Protection of botanical plants of significance	Beechworth Cemetery is of scientific (botanical) significance for its large collection of landscape plantings.	No scheduled works. Ongoing horticultural management.
Create a botanical map of current plants in the cemetery	85 of the original 100 plant species have been identified and recorded in 'Beechworth Cemetery – A landscape study' (Royal Botanic Gardens, 1981). Since this publication there has been no updated record of which species survive today.	Trust members to contact Royal Botanical Gardens to progress planning for 2024-2029 period.
Revegetation Plan	Create a revegetation plan to ensure future plantings replace those lost over time.	No scheduled works.
Wetland development	The creation of a wetland behind the Chinese Burning Towers has been proposed for some years with consideration to be taken of a rare Matchstick Grasshopper located in the area.	No scheduled works. Trust members to discuss proposal further.

## 8. Capacity Building

Strategic direction 1: Introduce subcommittee/portfolio structure into the Cemetery Trust.

Strategic direction 2: Establish a 'Friends of Beechworth Cemetery' group.

Strategic direction 3: Offer training/development opportunities to Trust members.

Strategic direction 4: Ongoing targeted approach to attract new Trust members.

### I. The Beechworth Cemetery Trust

The Beechworth Cemetery Trust currently contains six members. (DH requires between three to eleven trust members). Cemetery trust members are appointed for a five-year term and are then eligible for reappointment.

Currently, around half of the Trust are close to retirement, necessitating an urgent call for new members. For many years the Trust has relied on an enormous commitment of voluntary hours, particularly by the Chairperson and the Secretary. As well as being unsustainable, this practice exposes Trust members to a high risk of burn-out as well as masking the real costs of running the cemetery. To bring a greater sense of balance to the Trust, distribute the load more evenly and more accurately forecast its future budget, the following measures are recommended:

- a. The Cemetery Trust introduce a portfolio structure that assigns specific tasks to Trust members. Each Trust member must self-nominate for one or two specific portfolios that they must take responsibility for managing. Preferably, a portfolio subcommittee would contain two or more members, with one taking the lead.
- b. The Cemetery Trust meeting agenda should contain a standing item that calls for each subcommittee report.
- c. Subcommittees must meet independently *before* the Cemetery Trust scheduled meeting to ensure their own portfolio area is progressed.
- d. Seek new Trust members through a targeted approach that highlights skills that are required. Eg. events and marketing, tourism, finance, grants, grounds, Friends of Beechworth Public Cemetery liaison.
- e. Training opportunities are provided to Cemetery Trust members to match their portfolio interest and Trust members are encouraged to pursue learning opportunities such as attendance at relevant conferences or an annual tour to other cemeteries to advance shared learning.
- f. Consider hosting an annual AGM to showcase the Beechworth Public Cemetery as well as provide an opportunity for professional development for Trust members.
- g. Position Descriptions are created for each portfolio. In particular, the Position Description for the Secretary is revised, and tasks prioritised.

### II. Volunteer Management

The Beechworth Public Cemetery benefits from a wide range of supportive community members and active volunteers. Several active volunteers have declined to join the Cemetery Trust but are committed to ongoing involvement in the Beechworth Public Cemetery. Similarly, there are local residents with extensive historical knowledge who may be interested in sharing their knowledge as a Cemetery tour guide or in a research capacity. It is therefore recommended that:

- a. The Cemetery Trust establish a 'Friends of Beechworth Public Cemetery' group and offers membership (by invitation) to the volunteers who are engaged in voluntary work for the Cemetery.
- b. A Trust member is appointed as liaison for the 'Friends of Beechworth Public Cemetery', ensuring their needs are represented at Trust meetings.
- c. The Beechworth Public Cemetery considers scheduling an annual working bee that brings the 'Friends of Beechworth Public Cemetery' members and Cemetery Trust members together to achieve specific tasks (with members of the public) in the Cemetery grounds. This could be combined with a BBQ to express thanks to the volunteers and create an opportunity to celebrate achievements and contributions.

## 9. Community Engagement

Strategic direction 1: Update current brochures.

Strategic direction 2: Develop a suite of brochures for self-guided tours in hardcopy and on the website.

Strategic direction 3: Introduce self-guided walking tour brochures to the Information Centre. Strategic

direction 4: Develop an Information Pack for families.

### i. Update brochures

The Beechworth Public Cemetery's current self-guided Historical Tours brochure needed reordering. It was outdated and needed redesigning with the new logo and branding design to meet the current needs of the community. The new website provided a great opportunity to integrate the upgraded brochure as a self-guided walking tour online as well providing a hard copy brochure for visitors to use at the cemetery. A new brochure and self-guided walking tour online via the website was ready to use in the January of 2024.

### II. Develop a suite of self-guided walking tours

Respondents to the Beechworth Cemetery Survey (2019) conducted as part of the strategic planning process expressed a high level of interest in participating in historical tours. Over sixty per cent of respondents expressed an interest in tours themed around Women in History and Chinese History. Other areas of interest included Botanical Features (sixty per cent), Monumental Masonry (fifty per cent), Children in the Cemetery (forty-three per cent) and World War Veterans (forty per cent).

The Beechworth Cemetery Trust will develop a suite of brochures using some of these themes to provide self-guided walking tours like the newly designed Historic Tour. It will be designed using the cemetery logo and branding strategy and will be in hard copy as well as online using the website.

### III. Brochures to Information Centre

Communication will be established with the Information Centre where the new brochures and website for the self-guided walking tours will be discussed. Some brochures will be left at the centre and website address given to the staff.

#### **IV. Information Packs for Families**

Currently families access information for plots and burials by contacting the cemetery via phone, email, or website. It is often very confusing for families, especially in times of distress. Developing an information pack of relevant material needed for the reservation of plots, burials, monuments, etc would assist families to navigate the process. This information pack could be available online via the website and available when meeting with families.

## **10. Financial Plan**

The Financial Plan for 2024-2029 builds on the 2019 - 2024 Strategic Plan which was compiled by Mach 2 Consulting using a Department of Health -Cemeteries Sector Grant. Appendix C contains a draft Financial Plan and Budget that has been developed for the Cemetery Trust as part of this strategic planning process. The Financial Plan expresses the financial directions and goals for the Trust over the next five years, based on the assumptions included in the Strategic Plan.

However, the Strategic Plan (including the Financial Plan) has been designed as a dynamic and fluid document and it is expected that it will keep changing. The Financial plan will be reviewed by the Trust finance committee as part of its ongoing activities and in the light of new trends and information as this comes to hand. A formal review of the Strategic Plan should occur at least annually as a separate exercise to regular meetings. Revenue raised by the Trust is expected to:

- Encompass current Cemetery operational and maintenance costs.
- Cover repairs or replacement costs associated with the asset base.
- Ensure adequate financial reserves for future operations and perpetual maintenance.

This new Financial Plan for 2024-2029 was developed using the following aspects:

- The Department of Health Budget template for 2024-2025 in Appendix B was used to construct the budget projections for 2024-2025. These figures were then used in the compiling of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan finances as shown in Appendix C,
- The 2024-2025 figures were an extrapolation of the 2023-2024 actual revenue and expenditure figures, less any abnormal items or spikes. These final adjusted figures were then increased by 3.8% in keeping with the DH's approved CPI fees increase for 2024-2025,
- The extrapolated budget increase for the next four years up to 2029 were set at an average annual rate of 3.5%,
- The 2025-2029 Budget was altered in format to provide a more realistic and readable reflection of the organisation's financial direction,
- The new Strategic Financial Plan now incorporates the asset register with projections incorporating Capital Worked Expenditure. This is coupled with the \$130,000.00 Term Deposit as the "Perpetual Maintenance Set Aside" line item. This also aligns with the 2024-2025 Budget line item.,
- The projects to be funded with the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan are divided into two areas:
  - The funding for an office and the solar system totalling \$100,000 has been incorporated within the "Perpetual Maintenance Set Aside" line,
  - The remaining projects which total \$18,400 has been incorporated within the relevant normal budgeted expenditure lines. These projects equated to an average of \$3,680 per annum,
- The projects requiring funding that are "asset based" are increased within the totals of the "Asset Register" accordingly. This is correspondingly adjusted by reducing the Term Deposit "Asset Register" budget line i.e. \$130,000 "Perpetual Maintenance Set Aside" reduced by the \$25,000 (office) & \$75,000 (Solar System). Therefore, the "Perpetual Maintenance Set Aside" 2029 balance is \$30,000 and the Asset Term Deposit balance for 2029 is \$300,000.
- The new Financial Strategic Plan does not include revenue projections for new general cemetery reservations or new general cemetery interments as these options are no longer available due to this area being at burial capacity.



- Provision has been made for the contracting of a bookkeeper from the financial year 2025-2026. This safety net has been incorporated in the Strategic Plan due to the age and current tenure term of the current Honorary Treasurer. The calculations for this are based on \$50 per hour at an average of two hours per week. The workload includes: annual Fee Schedule update, Insurance schedule reconciliation, electronic payment authorisation, monthly bank statement reconciliations, various report generation for trust meetings, attending trust meetings for financial presentations, Re-investments of term deposits, preparation of the annual “Abstract of Accounts”, provide financial advice and direction to the Chairperson and the trust, annual budget preparation, etc,
- The Plan includes all labour and material costs for grounds and garden maintenance at a total of fourteen hours per week. These are essential costs that ensure the quality and presentation of the Beechworth Public Cemetery, which has been identified as a key community priority.
- The Trust will review all charges on an annual basis to ensure that a competitive pricing structure delivers long-term sustainability for the Cemetery Trust.
- Explanatory notes are also embedded with each relevant financial line item within the spreadsheet.

## Section III: Strategic Action Plan

In this section, specific projects are highlighted with delivery timelines for the life of this plan between 2024 and 2029.

Strategic Priority	Project/ Action	Timeline	Progress
Interments	Plan and establish a memorial garden for ashes.	2026	Working party
	Research and Plan for an extension of the cemetery in the 'Paddock' area.	2029	Grant needed
	Research and planning for a natural 'green' burial area.	2029	
	Investigate monuments for unmarked graves such as Fiddes.	2026-2027	
Infrastructure	Research for scoping of work required for Chinese Burning Towers using Contact from Bendigo Chinese Museum.	2026-2027	Grant needed
	Rotunda restoration needed due to white ants.	2026-2027	Grant needed
	Information board, brochures, and donation box.	2025	
	Toilet replacement, incorporating a sheltered area adjoining the children's garden; to include seating/tables.	2027	Grant needed
	Redesign and install consistent signage for cemetery grounds.	2025	Grant needed
	Research and plan for an Office.	2026	Grant needed
	Research and plan for using battery operated gardening machinery and installing solar energy.	2026-2027	Grant needed
Botanical Features	Conservation Management Plan for mapped Botanicals and Fauna such as rare Matchstick Grasshopper.	2025	
Cemetery Trust Capacity Building	Introduce portfolio (subcommittee) structure into Cemetery Trust meetings.	Ongoing	
	Establish a 'Friends of Beechworth Cemetery' group.	2024-2029	
	Offer training opportunities to Trust members to match their portfolio interest.	Ongoing	Ongoing
	Targeted approach to attract new Trust members with specific skills.	Ongoing	Ongoing

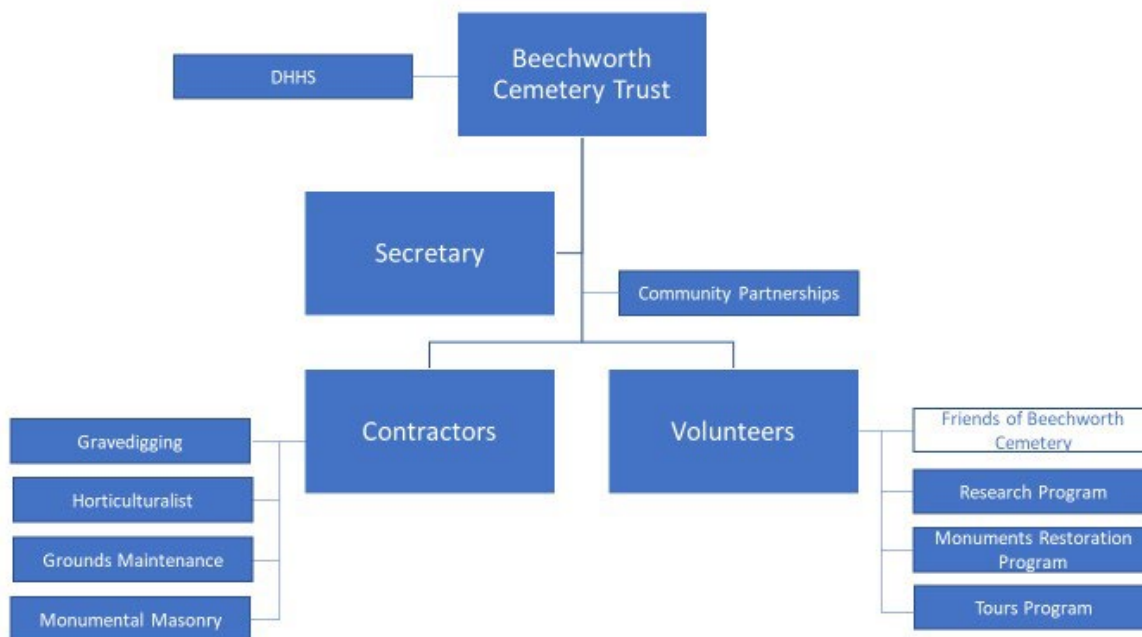
<b>Strategic Priority</b>	<b>Project/ Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Community Engagement	Update of current brochures.	2024-2029	Completed 2024
	Develop a suite of brochures for self-guided walking tours in hard copy and on the website.	2025-2026	
	Introduce self-guided walking tour brochures to the Information Centre.	2024-2029	
	Develop an Information Pack for families.	2024-2025	
Financial Planning	Develop 5-year capital works investment plan.	Ongoing	Ongoing
	Apply charges to all ancestry /research enquires.	Ongoing	Ongoing
	Develop new income streams.	Ongoing	Ongoing

## Section IV: Appendices

### A. Organisational Chart

The organisational chart below has been developed to help conceptualise the relationships the Cemetery Trust has with its staff and volunteers, and more broadly its stakeholders.

It is proposed that a 'Friends of Beechworth Cemetery' group be formed to encompass the voluntary functions of the Beechworth Public Cemetery, including the research, monumental masonry restoration/repairs and the future tours program.



## B. Financial Operational Budget 2024-2025

### Cemetery Trust Financial Budget

Cemetery trust:	Beechworth Public Cemetery
Financial year:	2024 - 2025

Please amend the line items in the tables below as required

Income	Budget	Actual	Variance
<b>Bank account</b>			
• Bank interest	350.00		
<b>Investment account</b>			
• Bank interest	16500.00		
<b>Grants</b>			
• Department of Health - (Half Lawn extension grant?)	20,180.00		
• Other grants - (DEECA Fountain Balance)	28,000.00		
<b>Other income</b>			
• Donations	300.00		
<b>Fees received</b>			
• Rights of interment - (Burials)	60,500.00		
• Interment services - (Plot/Niche Pre-Purchase)	16,000.00		
• Memorialisation	7750.00		
• Other	150.00		
<b>Perpetual maintenance set aside – (Term Deposit)</b>	10,000.00		
<b>Total income</b>	<b>159,730.00</b>		

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Bank account</b>			
• Bank charges	Nil		
<b>Operating expenses</b>			
• Equipment hire/purchase	2,000.00		
• Repairs, maintenance, and cleaning (for example, mower and other equipment repairs or parts)	5,000.00		
• Insurance (other than VMIA – for example, for a vehicle)	300.00		
• Gravediggers (contractors)	26,800.00		
• Ground staff	26,500.00		
• Administration staff (for example, trust secretary, manager)	Nil		
• Supply of memorialisation products	Nil		
• Accounting fees	Nil		
• Printing, postage, stationery, office supplies	2500.00		
• Website Expenses & development costs, Brochures	7,000.00		
• Memberships, Conferences & associated expenses	1,300.00		
• Telephone and internet	2,000.00		
• Utilities (water)	4,000.00		
• Cemetery database / mapping Chronicle maintenance fee?? - Plot reconciliations??)	1,500.00		
• Sundry & Miscellaneous Expenses	500.00		
<b>Cemetery projects</b>			
• Fencing repairs	Nil		
• Road/path maintenance	1,000.00		
• New cemetery area development (for example, memorial wall, new lawn beams)	40,360.00		
• Infrastructure (for example, shed, toilets, rotunda)	2,000.00		
• Mapping and/or database creation	Nil		
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>122,760.00</b>		

## C. Financial Plan and Operational Budget 2025-2029

This five-year budget projection is provided as a separate Strategic Plan Excel document

	Financial Year	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<b>1. Perpetual Maintenance set aside - (Term Deposit):</b>		\$10,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
<b>- \$130,000. (Capital Works)</b>						
<b>Capital Works Expenditure</b>						
Office facility			\$25,000.00			
Solar System for garden equip/tool/office				\$75,000.00		
<b>Capital Works Improvement Balance:</b>		<b>\$10,000.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>
<b>2. Operational revenue:</b>						
<b>Reservations:</b>						
General Section - (no plots)		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Lawn Section		\$11,500.00	\$11,900.00	\$12,315.00	\$12,745.00	\$13,190.00
Memorial Wall (ashes)		\$4,500.00	\$4,655.00	\$4,815.00	\$4,985.00	\$5,160.00
<b>Reservations sub-total</b>		<b>\$16,000.00</b>	<b>\$16,555.00</b>	<b>\$17,130.00</b>	<b>\$17,730.00</b>	<b>\$18,350.00</b>
<b>Interments:</b>						
General Section-New - (no plots)		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
General Section re-openings		\$13,920.00	\$14,400.00	\$14,900.00	\$15,420.00	\$15,960.00
Lawn Section-desk		\$8,420.00	\$8,715.00	\$9,020.00	\$9,335.00	\$9,660.00
Lawn Section -desk re-openings		\$6,100.00	\$6,315.00	\$6,535.00	\$6,765.00	\$7,000.00
Lawn Section-headstone New		\$12,100.00	\$12,525.00	\$12,965.00	\$13,420.00	\$13,890.00
Lawn Section-headstone re-openings		\$11,500.00	\$11,900.00	\$12,315.00	\$12,745.00	\$13,190.00
Memorial Wall ashes		\$7,260.00	\$7,515.00	\$7,780.00	\$8,055.00	\$8,335.00
Memorial garden/Ashes Sprinkling		\$1,200.00	\$1,240.00	\$1,285.00	\$1,330.00	\$1,375.00
<b>Interments sub-total</b>		<b>\$60,500.00</b>	<b>\$62,610.00</b>	<b>\$64,800.00</b>	<b>\$67,070.00</b>	<b>\$69,410.00</b>
Monuments restoration permits		\$7,750.00	\$8,020.00	\$8,300.00	\$8,590.00	\$8,890.00
Sub-total-internments-reservations		\$84,250.00	\$87,185.00	\$90,230.00	\$93,390.00	\$96,650.00
Grants - (Linked to Capital Investment Plan above)		\$48,180.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Donation box & sundry		\$450.00	\$465.00	\$480.00	\$495.00	\$510.00
Interest earned		\$16,850.00	\$17,440.00	\$18,050.00	\$18,680.00	\$19,335.00
<b>Total income:</b>		<b>\$149,730.00</b>	<b>\$105,090.00</b>	<b>\$108,760.00</b>	<b>\$112,565.00</b>	<b>\$116,495.00</b>

<b>Operational: expenses</b>	Gravedigger					
	Grounds staff	\$26,500.00	\$27,430.00	\$28,390.00	\$29,385.00	\$30,415.00
	Administration expenses	\$2,900.00	\$9,590.00	\$2,680.00	\$2,775.00	\$2,875.00
	Repairs - Maintenance	\$7,500.00	\$7,765.00	\$8,035.00	\$8,315.00	\$8,600.00
	Insurance	\$300.00	\$310.00	\$320.00	\$330.00	\$340.00
	Book-keeper	\$0.00	\$5,200.00	\$5,380.00	\$5,570.00	\$5,765.00
	Gravedigger	\$26,800.00	\$27,738.00	\$28,710.00	\$29,715.00	\$30,750.00
	Website, computer etc	\$8,500.00	\$8,800.00	\$9,110.00	\$9,430.00	\$9,760.00
	Membership/conferences etc	\$1,300.00	\$1,340.00	\$1,385.00	\$1,435.00	\$1,485.00
	Telephone & internet	\$2,000.00	\$2,070.00	\$2,145.00	\$2,220.00	\$2,300.00
	Utilities (water rates etc)	\$4,000.00	\$4,140.00	\$4,285.00	\$4,435.00	\$4,590.00
	Cemetery developments	\$40,360.00	\$2,000.00			\$5,000.00
	Infrastructure	\$4,000.00				
	<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$124,160.00</b>	<b>\$96,383.00</b>	<b>\$90,440.00</b>	<b>\$93,609.98</b>	<b>\$101,880.00</b>
	<b>Operating result</b>	<b>\$25,570.00</b>	<b>\$8,707.00</b>	<b>\$18,320.01</b>	<b>\$18,955.01</b>	<b>\$14,615.00</b>

### 3. Consolidates Cash Flow - including Capital Works

Cash inflows:	\$159,730.00	\$130,090.00	\$183,760.00	\$122,565.00	\$126,495.00
Cash outflows	<b>\$124,160.00</b>	<b>\$121,383.00</b>	<b>\$165,440.00</b>	<b>\$93,609.98</b>	<b>\$101,880.00</b>
<b>Net cash flows:</b>	<b>\$35,570.00</b>	<b>\$8,707.00</b>	<b>\$18,320.01</b>	<b>\$28,955.01</b>	<b>\$24,615.00</b>

<b>Assets:</b>	Investments (Term Deposits)	\$400,000.00	\$375,000.00	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00
	Roads, paths, signage	\$79,928.00	\$79,928.00	\$79,928.00	\$79,928.00	\$79,928.00
	Infrastructure	\$139,721.80	\$137,721.80	\$216,721.80	\$141,721.80	\$146,721.88
	Buildings/improvements	\$8,750.00	\$33,750.00	\$33,750.00	\$33,750.00	\$33,750.00
	Plant & equipment	\$10,587.60	\$30,587.60	\$30,587.60	\$30,587.60	\$30,587.60
	Heritage assets	\$187,004.20	\$131,004.20	\$187,004.20	\$187,004.20	\$187,004.20
	Office equipm/furniture etc	<b>\$4,874.00</b>	<b>\$4,874.00</b>	<b>\$4,874.00</b>	<b>\$4,874.00</b>	<b>\$4,874.00</b>
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$830,865.60</b>	<b>\$792,865.60</b>	<b>\$852,865.60</b>	<b>\$777,865.60</b>	<b>\$782,865.68</b>
<b>Liabilities:</b>	Pre - paid grants	\$28,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	Pre-purchased plots-niches	\$189,100.00	\$195,720.00	\$202,570.00	\$209,660.00	\$216,995.00
	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$217,100.00</b>	<b>\$195,720.00</b>	<b>\$202,570.00</b>	<b>\$209,660.00</b>	<b>\$216,995.00</b>



<b>NET ASSETS:</b>	<b>\$830,865.60</b>	<b>\$792,865.60</b>	<b>\$852,865.60</b>	<b>\$777,865.60</b>	<b>\$782,865.68</b>
<b>NET LIABILITIES:</b>	<b>\$217,100.00</b>	<b>\$195,720.00</b>	<b>\$202,570.00</b>	<b>\$209,660.00</b>	<b>\$216,995.00</b>
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>\$613,765.60</b>	<b>\$597,145.60</b>	<b>\$650,295.60</b>	<b>\$568,205.60</b>	<b>\$565,870.68</b>

## D. Beechworth Cemetery Trust Survey

As part of the strategic planning process for the Strategic Plan 2019-2024, an online survey was distributed by Beechworth Cemetery Trust members via email, social media, and hard copy in May 2019.

One hundred and nine responses were received: the majority with a postcode in either Beechworth or surrounding north-eastern towns. A full summary of responses was provided to the Trust in a separate document.

The survey results were extremely positive, indicating appreciation for the work of the Cemetery Trust and interest in ideas such as alternative burial options, memorial gardens, and Cemetery tours.

The questions that informed this plan included the following:

1. How often do you visit the Beechworth Cemetery?
2. Can you please note the main reason for visiting?
3. Do you have any comments or feedback on the cemetery grounds?
4. Have you used the Beechworth Cemetery website?
5. Have you used the website for tracing family history? If Yes, do you have any comments or feedback on the service provided?
6. Beechworth Cemetery are exploring the option of offering green burials. The Beechworth Cemetery are considering offering the option of green burials? A green burial is an environmentally friendly burial that aims to have as little impact on the earth as possible. Is this something that would interest you?
7. Are there any other services or ideas you would like to see the Cemetery offer or develop?
8. Would you be interested in attending a guided tour of the Beechworth Cemetery on any of the following topics? (Chinese History/ Botanical Tour/ Women in History/ WWII veterans/ Children in the Cemetery/ Monumental Masonry)
9. The Beechworth Cemetery is managed by a voluntary trust consisting of eight members of the local community. If you are interested in finding out about becoming a member of the Beechworth Cemetery Trust, please provide your contact details so one of our Trust members can contact you for a chat.
10. Can you please provide the postcode of the town in which you live?

A full report of the results was provided to Cemetery Trust members in a separate document.

