

BEECHWORTH CEMETERY TRUST

Policy: Beechworth Public Cemetery Tours Policy.

Introduction

This policy has been introduced to provide clarity and guidance for community groups, organisations, schools, and individuals who endeavour to undertake tours of the historic Beechworth Public Cemetery.

Legislative requirements:

The Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003, Part 7 Division 2, establishes the power for a Cemetery Trust to make rules with respect to the general care, protection and management of a public cemetery. The Department of Health and Human Services – Victoria - (DHHS) have advised that where a Trust develops a policy to manage operating procedures of the cemetery which does not alter or conflict with the Model Rules for the Cemetery the Trust does not need to have the Policy approved by the Governor in Council. The Trust has reviewed this Policy and has not sought approval from the Governor in General as the Policy does not conflict or alter the Model Rules for the Trust.

It is a mandatory requirement that all Beechworth Cemetery Trust Members hold a current Victorian “Working with Children Certificate” regardless of the tour clientele that they are providing the tour service for.

Background:

The Beechworth Public Cemetery, established in 1856 is the final resting place of over seventeen thousand men, woman and children, from the goldrush era of the 1850’s to the present day. Over ten thousand people are buried in unmarked graves, with many of these involving multiple internments.

The Beechworth Public Cemetery is historically, culturally and botanically significant for:

- a) being a substantially intact example of a mid-nineteenth century goldfields Cemetery still in use.
- b) its collection of buildings and structures which include typical cemetery features such as entrance gates, rotunda and headstones. Added to this are the highly distinctive and unusual features such as the Turkish fountain, the rare twin Chinese burning towers built in 1857 and altar constructed in 1883 and also the many Chinese footstone monuments.
- c) the scientific (botanical) significance of its large collection of landscape plantings comprising hawthorn, photinia and rosemary hedges, conifers, palms, evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs, bulbs and native grasses. These extensive varied and plantings recognises the facility as the best example of a garden cemetery in Victoria.
- d) it’s aesthetic significance as an early example of a cemetery influenced by the Romantic and Picturesque ideals which gained worldwide popularity in the mid-nineteenth century.

These significant factors, along with those undertaking family research, attract many thousands of visitors and tourist to the facility annually.

Policy process:

The Cemetery Trust is responsible for the dignified care of the remains of people buried/interred in the Beechworth Public Cemetery. The community of Beechworth regards the Cemetery as a sacred place where the remains of many of their loved ones are at rest. Tours of the Cemetery must conform to and recognise this background.

There are four types of Tours available for those visiting the Beechworth Public Cemetery.

A. Self-Guided Tours:

The Trust provides visitors with the opportunity to undertake a self-guided tour of the historic General Cemetery. To assist with this, a "*Tour of Historic Graves at Beechworth Cemetery*" pamphlet is available from a receptacle inside the main entrance gates. The "Tour" covers thirteen renowned, important or significant figures buried within the Cemetery. The "Tours" brochure can also be downloaded from the Beechworth Public Cemetery's Website, along with the "*Short Story Telling Videos*" using smart-phones and these stories also cover some of the pamphlet listed graves. Tour participants are advised that if, during their visit, a funeral is taking place, that they maintain a reasonable and respectful distance from the funeral proceedings.

B. Unguided group tours:

These particular excursions involve group tours of the Cemetery that do not require a Cemetery Trust member to attend and act as a tour guide. The Cemetery requirements for these tours are:

- I. Tour operators who wish to conduct tours of the Cemetery must first obtain the permission of the Cemetery Trust. Applications are to be made in writing or via email to the Trust at least 14 days prior to the tour taking place. Where applicable, a copy of the tour operator's indemnity insurance policy should be enclosed with the application, along with a brief description of the tour's presentation content. A copy of the "*Registration as a Tour Operator/Booking Agent*" is attached as **Appendix 1**. This application process also provides the Cemetery Trust with the ability to notify tour operators who have prebooked a tour that a funeral has since been scheduled and alternative tour dates need to be arranged.
- II. The Cemetery must not be used by tour operators as an opportunity for commercial gain. (*Please refer to item "Non-commercial gain - below*). Nonetheless, tour operators may charge a reasonable fee for participants on guided tours who in turn should expect to be provided with accurate, educational, and historical information. There is no Cemetery charge for these tours or any limit on numbers attending.
- III. Group tour leader must ensure that tour participants conduct themselves respectfully whilst in the Cemetery.

C. Group requested guided tours:

It is anticipated that tour operators will provide their own guides when undertaking a Cemetery tour. However, if requested by a tour operator, the Cemetery Trust may provide a tour guide. To assist those wishing to undertake a conducted tour of the Cemetery, the following protocols must be observed:

- I. All tour conditions as detailed within B. Unguided group tours (above), also apply to Requested guided tours, i.e., points I, II & III.

- II. There will be a charge of \$10 per head, payable by the tour operator,
- III. The numbers that can be accommodate on a conducted tour is limited to twenty (20) unless otherwise negotiated with the Trust.
- IV. It is preferred that these tours are conducted on weekday only and will be booked as such,

D. School Group Tours

School groups are the most frequent users requesting Conducted Tours, mainly due to the Cemetery's Gold Rush history. The following additional requirements apply to tours requested by school groups:

a. Tour notification:

Applicants seeking tours of the Cemetery are to be made in writing to the Trust and to be received at least 14 days prior to the tour taking place,

b. Size of Group:

The size of school groups visiting the Cemetery is restricted to a maximum of 30 students unless otherwise negotiated with the Trust.

c. Adult supervision:

Additional to the Tour Leader/Guide, it is mandatory for school groups of up to 20 children to have at least 2 other adults in attendance to assist actively in the orderly conduct of the tour. Larger groups are to have a minimum of 3 other adults.

d. Behaviour:

The following rules are to be explained to, and adhered by all tour participants:

- I. No calling out or shouting is permitted in the Cemetery,
- II. Monuments must not be climbed upon,
- III. Group members must walk, not run, within the Cemetery and confine themselves to the designated roads and pathways,
- IV. No vegetations is to be disturbed within the Cemetery, i.e.; the picking of flowers, digging up plants, breakage to trees and shrubs etc.
- V. Group activities must be conducted under supervision in an orderly manner.

Other tour mandatory requirements:

These requirements cover all "Tours" within the Beechworth Public Cemetery:

1) Overall conduct and respect:

Tours must be conducted in a way that respects the dignity of the Cemetery, reflecting the expectations of the local community that the remains of their loved-ones will be respected.

2) Tour times:

Tours must be conducted during daytime. All tour must be completed no later than 7.00pm during Summer, 6.00pm during Spring and Autumn, and 5.00pm during Winter. Night time tours are not permitted for Occupational and Safety reasons.

3) Non-commercial gain:

The Cemetery is open to the public as a community amenity and visitors and tour participants should be able to visit the Cemetery on a non-commercial basis. Therefore, the Cemetery must not be used by tour operators as an opportunity for commercial gain.

4) Booked tour cancellations:

The Cemetery is an operating facility and therefore, if a burial in the General Cemetery is to take place on the day that a tour has been pre-booked, then the following options may occur:

- I. The tour to be cancelled, giving as much notice as possible to the tour operator, and/or,
- II. The tour to be collaboratively re-scheduled to an agreed future date.

5) Vehicle restrictions:

No vehicles are permitted to enter the Cemetery in connection with tours, unless approved by the Cemetery Trust.

6) Donations:

Visitors to the Cemetery are encouraged to provide a donation to the facility as an appreciation for their experience. A donation box is located inside the main entrance gates and these collections are used to cover the costs of tour pamphlet production and the upkeep of the Cemetery grounds.

7) Lodging your tour experience

All visitors to the Beechworth Public Cemetery are encouraged to lodge their experience on "[TripAdvisor](#)". This provides the Trust with a facility feedback improvement mechanism.

Consultation:

During the development and review of this Policy the Trust consulted with the Department of Health and Human Services - Victoria (DHHS) and the Cemeteries and Crematorium Association of Victoria (CCAV) as well as a desktop scan of other Cemetery Trust websites.

Policy Clarification and Concerns:

If the contents of this policy require further clarification or additional information by Cemetery users, then these should be directed to "[The Cemetery Trust](#)".

Policy Publicity:

This policy will be available on the Beechworth Public Cemetery website and also made available on request by contacting the Trust.

Implementation of Policy:

The Trust authorises the Chairperson and the Secretary to implement this policy, and where applicable, consistent with any strategic documents or plans for the Beechworth Cemetery Trust.

References:

Cemeteries & Crematoria Act - 2003 - Section 26
Occupational Health & Safety Act - 2004 (Vic)
Occupational Health & Safety Regulation - 2017
Beechworth Public Cemetery: "Donations Policy"

Adopted: 13th January 2010

Reviewed: 24th February 2014
20th March 2023
To be reviewed 2025