

# BEECHWORTH PUBLIC CEMETERY TRUST

## Policy: Flowers, Vases, Ornaments & Breakable Items on Graves.

### Introduction

The principal function of the Beechworth Public Cemetery is to provide a public facility for the interment of the bodily and cremated remains of the deceased. The Cemetery is also a place for the community to visit, grieve and pay respect their deceased family members, friends and loved ones. Flowers and other tributes traditionally form a central role in the funeral, bereavement, and grieving process and all who visit are encouraged and welcomed to do so. Conversely, the Cemetery Trust has a responsibility to maintain a safe environment and to minimise risks for all users of the facility. This responsibility extends to items that are brought into the Cemetery and placed on or around graves, as these items may create safety and risk issues due to the potential of damage and breakage. In this regard, the Cemetery Trust is therefore bound by the relevant Occupational Health & Safety Act, Risk Management Principles and the Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulations - 2015. Therefore, this Policy has been developed to provide clarity to Cemetery users for the following purposes:

- Cemetery users can understand the guidelines concerning the placement of floral tributes, ornaments and all such items on the graves of relatives, friends and loved ones within the Cemetery.
- Cemetery staff and Trust members can maintain the Cemetery grounds to an aesthetically high standard that can be enjoyed by all users.
- All who enter the Cemetery can understand that they have a responsibility in keeping the Cemetery tidy and safe by abiding by this policy.
- All facility users are provided with an environment that is safe and risk free.

### Procedure

The Cemetery Trust respects and understands the sensitivity that surrounds the centuries old tradition of floral and other tributes at funerals and beyond and the placement of these on graves by family and friends of the deceased. Therefore, the following guidelines regarding the placement of flowers, vases, ornaments, and all items by Cemetery users has been adopted by the Cemetery Trust:

### General Conditions:

#### Flowers:

- Fresh, silk, dried and plastic flowers may be placed on graves.
- Wrappings, string, twine, tape, wire, ribbons, and rubber bands are to be removed from fresh flowers prior to placing these into the vases.

- Fresh flowers that have withered are to be removed by the relatives and friends of the deceased or these will be removed by Cemetery staff.

### **New Burials:**

- With new and re-opened graves, the flowers used in the funeral service are usually placed on the fresh earth that has covered or will cover the coffin. It is the responsibility of relatives/friends of the deceased to remove the flowers once these have withered/deteriorated. These should be removed about a month after the funeral.

### **Vases, Urns, Ornaments:**

- The Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulations 2015 stipulates that approval for the following items must be sought from the Cemetery Trusts prior to these being placed on a memorial or place of interment:
  1. Ceramic or glass items that are fragile or breakable; or
  2. Metal items that are likely to rust or deteriorate; or
  3. Items likely to cause harm or a risk to health or safety.
- Therefore, unsecured and/or non approved vases, ornaments, urns, figurines, statuettes, terracotta, ceramics, pottery, terrariums, photo frames, toys, flags, solar items, and wind chime/devices are not permitted on graves. (These may pose a safety hazard for Cemetery staff and visitors).
- Alternatively, approved vases, urns, ornaments etc. as listed above must be secured to the grave by a commercial adhesive that holds the item in place securely. This is especially important for children's graves. The adhesive must also have the capability to withstand Beechworth's climatic extremes. Ribbons, blu-tac, tape, wire etc. are inappropriate for safety reasons.
- Household items i.e. glass jars, bottles, dishes/bowls, tins, jugs, decanters, drinking glasses, carafes, receptacles and containers etc. are also prohibited as these items are not designed to hold flowers and are liable to topple, break and again create safety issues. This also includes plastic containers and vessels. Although these are not normally breakable, they degenerate over time when exposed to the elements for extended periods.
- Monumental Masons provide a range of polished granite and marble vases specifically designed for grave usage. Also, vase recesses can be incorporated into the grave during the construction process. The Trust recommends and encourages these options which provides durable and lasting receptacles for floral tributes and meets the safety and risks requirements concerning breakage and damage as detailed within this policy.

- A small number of old graves have domed glass covered wreaths placed on the grave lids. Due to their age and constant exposure to the elements, from time to time these glass domed covers become damaged or broken. Once damage has occurred, these will be removed for safety reasons.
- Plant containers and receptacles, regardless of their type or size that are used to hold pot plants are not permitted on or around graves. In most instances, these are left unattended which results in the eventual death of the plant. These then become unsightly and may also create safety concerns. Seeds from some of these plants may also disperse, become invasive and result in noxious vegetation infestations within the confines of the Cemetery. These may then require expensive control and eradication measures and associated costs.

### **Grave Perimeters:**

- Decorative borders, kerbing, tiles, bricks, rocks, stones, and pebbles are not permitted around the perimeter of graves. These may impede mowing and ground maintenance by Cemetery staff and create tripping hazards.
- Wind chimes/devises, solar items, flags, mirror, or reflective objects are not to be attached or suspended from trees, bushes, shrubs, fences or hedges adjacent to graves as these may pose a safety hazard for Cemetery staff and visitors.

### **Fire Restrictions:**

- Normally, the burning of candles, lanterns, incense sticks, oil burners, sparkles, and other inflammable items/material are not permitted within the Cemetery.
- However, these may be used in association with ceremonies for the interment, cremation, or commemoration of the dead **only**. These flammable items must not, without the prior approval of the Cemetery Trust, be left alight when unattended.
- Ornamental candles left on grave lids have a history of melting in hot weather resulting in staining the grave.
- Restricted use of these flammable items is based on safety reasoning and also as Beechworth is zoned as a designated “high risk” bushfire area.  
*However, see “Chinese Section” under General Cemetery.*

### **Unauthorised Structures:**

- The installation of Monuments must be constructed by a registered Monumental Mason recognised by The Beechworth Public Cemetery Trust. No monument is to be installed without the approval of the Trust. This ensures that the monument is properly constructed and does not present a potential safety issue or risk now or into the future. Any unauthorised structure erected may be removed by The Cemetery Trust at the expense of the person/persons concerned. There are however,

regulations in regards to the size, shape, type and colour of Headstones within the Lawn Section of the Cemetery. For more detailed information, please consult the “*Beechworth Public Cemetery Monument Policy*”.

### **Food and Beverages:**

- Food and Beverages placed on or around graves are not permitted. This includes confectionary, cakes, biscuits, soft drink, and alcohol either in cans, plastic containers, or glass bottles. All food deteriorates, which may result in the staining of graves and can also attract unwanted insects, ant nests and vermin. Beverage containers look unsightly and are a safety risk due to possible breakage. However, see “**Chinese Section**” under **General Cemetery**.

### **Memorial Wall:**

The Memorial Wall consists of multiple niches that hold the interned ashes of the deceased following a cremation. A small brass plaque seals the face of each interment niche which is inscribed with the burial and personal details of each deceased person. In some instances, small metal “tubular,” “tulip” or “cup” type vases have been attached to the wall beside a number of these brass plaques. As a matter of courtesy, family, friends, and visitors who attend the Wall are required to respect adjacent Memorial Wall cremation niches as follows:

- Only one small “tubular,” “tulip” or “cup” type vase to be secured to one side of each niche. This then provides space for a similar vase to be installed beside the adjoining niche that belongs to the family of other cremated persons.
- Small sprays of flowers that do not impinge on adjacent niches are to be used only.

### **Lawn Cemetery:**

Given the layout, nature and purpose of the Lawn Cemetery, there are restrictions on the number of vases that can be used. Both “Headstone” and “Desktop” monuments are supported on concrete plinths. To enable mowing and ground maintenance, no vases, ornaments, figurines, statuettes, terracotta, ceramics, pottery, terrariums, urns, photo frames, candles, toys, flags, solar items, wind chime/devices are permitted on the concrete plinths. The restriction on vase numbers is as follows:

#### **Headstone Section**

- Most “Headstones” have vase provision within the granite support base in the form of two circular vase recesses for the holding of flowers. These are to be used only, with no additional free-standing vases, ornaments, and items permissible.

#### **Desktop Section**

- Each “Desktop” is separated from the opposite grave by a small, polished granite divider. These dividers have two vase recesses for the holding of flowers, one for each grave. Therefore, only one vase recess can be used for each grave. Again, no additional free-standing vases, ornaments and items are permissible.
- No vases, items or objects are to be placed on or attached to the top of the polished granite dividers between the provided vase recesses.

**Note:**

Both the Headstone Section and the Desk Top Section are “glass free”

### **General Cemetery:**

Although there are no restrictions on the number of vases that may be placed on graves, (unlike The Lawn Section, as detailed above), visitors are required to respect adjacent graves and access to them by other users.

### **Chinese Section:**

This section of the Cemetery contains two very rare hexagonal Chinese burning towers built in 1857. These towers have internal burning chambers where paper prayers and money offerings to the dead were burned. Meals for the dead were often left on the altar behind the Burning Towers. These customs continue today on a limited basis, usually by Chinese visitors to Beechworth who burn small paper prayers only and occasionally place fruit and small food offerings on the altar. Given that the Cemetery respects and facilitates the burial and funeral customs, beliefs and traditions of all denominations and nationalities, the Beechworth Public Cemetery Trust therefore sanctions these Chinese traditions. These are the only exceptions to the “Fire Restrictions” and “Food & Beverages” clauses as detailed within this policy.

### **Policy enforcement:**

The Cemeteries & Crematoria Regulations – 2015 provides Cemetery Trusts with the power to remove any items that have been listed as prohibited within this policy, i.e., unsecure glass jars, ornaments, items etc. In the interest of safety for all users of the Cemetery, the following process has been adopted:

- Random removal of items when they are detected.
- Annually, as part of a general ‘safety audit review’, an advertisement advising the community and visitors of this annual audit will be placed in the local newspaper, approximately sixty days prior to the impending audit. Social Media may also be used, as well as placing notification on the Beechworth Public Cemetery website.
- If an item is of some value, then it may be stored by the Trust for a reasonable time and made available for collection by the owner.

## **Policy Clarification and Concerns:**

If the contents of this policy create any issues or concerns that may require further clarification or additional information by Cemetery users, then these should be directed to **“The Trust”**

## **Authority:**

- Occupational Health & Safety Act - 2004 (Vic)
- Occupational Health & Safety Regulation – 2017
- The Australian Standard on Good Governance Principles.
- Cemeteries & Crematoria Regulations– 2015

## **Adopted:**

- Beechworth Public Cemetery Trust meeting – 17.11.2014
- Beechworth Public Cemetery Trust meeting - 16.08.2021