

# **BEECHWORTH PUBLIC CEMETERY TRUST**

## **Policy: Military Graves, Monuments and Veteran Recognition in the Beechworth Public Cemetery.**

### **Introduction:**

This policy has been introduced to provide clarity and guidance in regards to those seeking to have a:

- Military Grave constructed by the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) within the Beechworth Public Cemetery on behalf of a deceased veteran;
- OAWG Military “*Bronze Recognition Plaques*” erected on an existing family grave containing an approved Veteran,
- Veterans cremated remains interred in the Memorial Wall or garden setting,
- Official Australian Military Emblem/Insignia to be used on a family monuments containing a Veteran;

This policy also encompasses OAWG war grave ownership and monuments construction constraints and covers the Lawn Section, General Sections and the Memorial Wall of the Beechworth Public Cemetery.

### **Legislative requirements:**

The Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003, Part 7 Division 2, establishes the power for a Cemetery Trust to approve and manage the establishment and alteration of monuments within the cemetery. In particular clause 99(1)(c) enables a Cemetery Trust to refuse an application for any other reason that the Cemetery Trust thinks fit. The Department of Health - Victoria - (DH) 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.

### **Background:**

The historic Beechworth Public Cemetery, established in 1856, is the final resting place of over seventeen thousand men, women and children from the early Goldrush days until the present. Of these, over ten thousand people within the General Cemetery are buried in unmarked graves, with many of these involving multiple unrelated interments. Around six thousand people were former residents or patients of the large institutions that once flourished in the township. The accurate documentation of some of these many thousands of burials cannot be guaranteed, particularly as, from 1856 up to 1877, the burial records are either non-existent, partially missing or sparse. This situation results, in many instances, in difficulties establishing the exact location of unmarked graves for possible future monument installation.

From this, it is imperative that the Trust be involved in any plot location process, either for family members of the deceased, researchers or for marking the plot(s) for Monumental Stonemasons who may be commissioned by OAWG’s to construct monuments on grave-sites. Although the new “website-based Chronicle mapping system” provides an electronic

plot location overview of the Cemetery, inaccuracies and inconsistencies exist, particularly with the early record keeping of the time or missing records as detailed above.

From a military interment perspective, the Beechworth Public Cemetery is the final resting place of Australian war veterans from most major conflicts from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Boer War - South African War- (1899–1902) until Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War - (1962 - 1973). Since the Vietnam conflict, there have been other and ongoing conflicts and peace keeping missions that Australia has and will participate in as a global partner in the international peace keeping process. From these latter and future campaigns, there is an expectation that the number of military burials within the facility will increase.

### Policy Scope:

Not all interred veterans within the Beechworth Public Cemetery are afforded official war commemorations from the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) which has strict criteria for awarding and providing graves/plaques/niches for returned service personnel. Therefore, this Policy predominantly covers the current seventy-three OAWG commemorations that have been recognised to date and also any future Military graves/plaques/niches that may be constructed by the OAWG on behalf of each deceased veteran. This policy also covers some guidance for military plaque recognition not funded by OAWG for veterans who are interred in a private family grave.

A current OAWG asset listing of these Military Graves/plaques/niches within the Beechworth Public Cemetery is attached as **Appendix 1**

### Policy process:

The following process for the application for military recognition, the grave/monument construction and the criteria and responsibilities for all parties concern with this is detailed below:

#### 1. Office of Australian War Graves- (OAWG):

The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) is a part of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and its three major roles are:

- the maintenance of war cemeteries and individual war graves within Australia and the region, as the agent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission;
- to officially commemorate eligible veterans who have died post-war and whose deaths are accepted as being caused by war service; and
- to provide and maintain national memorials overseas.

#### 2. Official Commemoration:

The Australian Government is committed to remembering the service of eligible veterans through the provision of official commemorations. Official commemoration is the provision of a personalised physical marker that recognises the service of an eligible veteran or serving member after their death, at a site they or their family have chosen.

#### 3. Commemoration Eligibility:

All veterans whose deaths have been accepted by DVA as related to their war service will be offered an official commemoration.

Official commemoration will also be offered to veterans who were:

- ADF members who died during war, peacekeeping activities, or certain other operations including warlike and non-warlike service,
- multiple amputees as defined in Section 27.1 of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) on maximum pension rate where service in a war or conflict has been proven,
- ex-prison of war,
- a Victoria Cross recipient.

Official commemoration is also offered to veterans receiving one of the following payments when they pass away:

- Disability Compensation Payment at the special rate, where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict,
- extreme disablement adjustment (EDA), where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict,
- temporary special rate pension (TSR or T&TI), where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict;
- intermediate rate pension I(NT), where the veteran has seen service in a war or conflict.

#### 4. Commemoration Process:

There are four (4) steps in the veteran commemoration process and these are:

- 4.1 Advise DVA of the veteran's death by calling 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or by visiting a VAN office or using the general enquiry form which can also be used.
- 4.2 DVA will assess if the veterans are eligible for an official commemoration and if they are, the applicant will be advised.
- 4.3 OAWG will send the veteran's executor or nominated contact an application form asking about the type of commemoration they would like.
- 4.4 Once the completed form is returned, OAWG will arrange for the commemoration to be ordered and place.
- 4.5 OAWG provides commemorations in:
  - A cemetery
  - A crematorium
  - An OAWG Garden of Remembrance

#### 5. Commemoration Options:

##### 5.1 Burial in a General Cemetery

The purchase of the grave plot is the responsibility of the family or estate. OAWG will provide the grave cover and plaque. Before OAWG can provide an official commemoration, the grave must be completely bare of any and all monumental work; i.e.; the site is completely cleared.

It is not possible for OAWG to place an official commemoration on an existing war grave.

A cemetery, other than a lawn cemetery, OAWG provides a standard commemoration consisting of:

- Rendered concrete curbing
- Infill a rendered concrete grave marker
- A bronze plaque.

## 5.2 Burial in a Lawn Cemetery

OAWG will provide a bronze plaque for placement on the grave. Depending on the cemetery regulations, a plinth or base may be provided, which is the case of the Beechworth Public Cemetery. The headstone/desktop monument for the OAWG plaque must conform with the existing monuments within the Beechworth Lawn.

Bronze plaques provided in a cemetery are inscribed with the veterans:

- service emblem
- initials and surname
- service details
- date of death
- aged.

There is also the option to have either or both:

- a personal message (limited wording)
- a religious emblem.

## 5.3 Placement of ashes

OAWG will provide the plaque and pay for a single niche. The plaque can be placed either on a wall or in a garden setting.

If a garden placement is chosen, OAWG will only contribute the amount equal to the cost of a niche wall placement. Any additional costs are the responsibility of the family.

Crematorium plaques do not contain personal messages or religious emblems.

If the ashes have been scattered or the family decide to keep them, OAWG will provide a Garden of Remembrances plaque.

## 5.4 Bronze plaques in a Garden of Remembrance

OAWG has established Gardens of Remembrance in each state and territory capital city, as well as in Launceston and Townsville. Most are located near a major war cemetery. Bronze plaques placed in these settings do not contain a personal message or religious emblem. A request for a photograph can be made and these are provided with one supplied free of charge.

## 6. If a veteran is not automatically eligible.

In cases where a veteran is not automatically eligible for an official commemoration, and it is believed their death was attributed to their war service, a request can be made to DVA to investigate their cause of death to determine if it can be linked to their war service by:

- Completing the on-line request form for a determination for cause of death to be assessed as war related,
- Attach and email to: [compensation.claims@dva.gov.au](mailto:compensation.claims@dva.gov.au) or;
- Writing to the Deputy Commissioner, Dept of Veterans' Affairs, GPO Box 9998, Brisbane QLD 4001.

## 7. Timeframe for arranging a commemoration:

This is dependent upon the type and location of the commemoration. On average, commemorations are completed within the following timeframes:

- Full grave cover: 6 to 8 months
- Lawn cemetery or crematorium placement: 4 to 6 months
- Garden of Remembrance placement: 3 to 5 months.

These timeframes apply from the date the completed form has been received by OAWG.

Full grave covers may take longer to provide due to varying regulations from cemetery to cemetery or because the cemetery may be remotely located.

## 8. Second burials in a OAWG grave:

The grave of an eligible veteran in a cemetery may be re-opened for further burials, such as a partner or family member. Where OAWG has provided a full grave cover, the grave will be restored to its original condition at no expense to the family. The family may then place a plaque for the additional burial at their own cost in the centre and towards the foot of the grave.

The cemetery is responsible for the restoration of the grave in lawn areas. An additional plaque may be placed if the lawn cemetery but these options should be discussed with OAWG.

## 9. What is tenure:

Tenure pertains to the burial plot or niche lease within the Beechworth Public Cemetery. Some metropolitan cemeteries have limited plot/niche tenures but the Beechworth Public Cemetery has unlimited tenure.

## 10. Commemoration protocol and maintenance responsibilities:

OAWG is responsible for maintaining official commemorations which is carried out as often as resources permit, usually once a year. From time to time, maintenance to commemorations may be delayed due to bad weather or resources limitations.

Also, these commemorations remain the property of the OAWG and cannot be altered in any way unless approved by OAWG - DVA.

## 11. The use of a service badge on a private memorial:

The family of a veteran who has died may choose to acknowledge their loved one's service on a privately arranged memorial at the site of burial or ashes placement. All ADF personnel are entitled to have their service badge inscribed on their private memorial which will be Navy, Army or Air Force badges. Personnel who served in the Merchant Navy are entitled to an Australian Merchant Navy badge.

Permission to use the badge must come from OAWG - DVA. This plaque recognition process falls into three categories:

### 11.1 OAWG approved military plaques.

An application can be made to the OAWG for a "Military Bronze Recognition Plaque" for a Veteran for mounting on an existing family grave. The application process for these plaques is similar to that for a Military Grave, but a copy of the veteran's "Death Certificate" is not mandatory. The approval procedure is dependent on the veteran's military service and, in some instances, this may be denied. If the plaque is

approved, then the OAWG will have the plaque manufactured and mailed to the applicant at no cost.

However, the cost of mounting the plaque on the family grave is the sole responsibility of the veterans family and this must be undertaken by a Monumental Stonemason approved by the Beechworth Cemetery Trust.

### 11.2 Veterans' family funded military plaques:

If the family of a veteran wish to have a bronze commemoration plaque mounted on a private grave and funded by themselves, permission to use the official military badge , must still be sought. The simplest way of gaining such approval is to access the DVA Nominal Rolls and then:

- Input the veterans' military details into his/her relevant theatre of service;
- If the veterans' service is approved, download and print off the veteran's service record;
- This document can then be used for the manufacture of the bronze military plaque by a Monumental Stone Mason approved by the Beechworth cemetery Trust.

These private memorials are arranged and paid for by the next-of-kin or executor of the veteran concerned along with its ongoing care and maintenance.

### 11.3 Headstones and desktop monuments:

For family members of veterans wishing to use the official military badge on graves within the General and Lawn Cemetery's and also Memorial Wall Niche cover plates, then official permission to do so is still required. The "permission" process is the same as in Veterans' family funded military plaques (above).

In all three instances detailed above, a "Memorial Permit Fee" for the erecting of the plaque is payable to the Beechworth Cemetery Trust. The "*Application for a Permit to Erect or Add to a Monument*" Form for this process is available on the Cemetery Trust's website along with the applicable fee payable.

## 12 Military Graves and Monumental Masons:

All monuments/graves within the Beechworth Public Cemetery must be constructed by a Monumental Stonemason approved by the Beechworth Cemetery Trust as deemed by the Dept. of Health, Victoria. From this, monuments/graves cannot be erected, refurbished or removed by anyone other than the above-mentioned Monumental Stonemasons. (OH&S requirements, construction standards etc are paramount in these processes). With Military Graves approved by the OAWG, a Monumental Stonemason appointed by that Department is authorised to undertake the military monuments construction.

## 13 Existing unmarked Veteran's Graves

Veterans that may still be interred in unmarked graves are confined to the Beechworth General Cemetery only. These unmarked veterans usually fall into two categories and may be entitled to a:

### 13.1 Full Military Graves:

If a veteran is buried alone or with a spouse in an unmarked plot and the OAWG approve the construction of a military monument, then a full military grave will be built. Any recognition for a spouse is to be in the form of a small desktop monument located in the graves centre and funded by the family(s) of the grave occupying veteran.

### 13.2 Military Headstone Monuments:

If a veteran is buried in the Beechworth General Cemetery and in an unmarked plot which includes one or more unrelated person(s), which has been the case with patients/clients from Beechworth's former institutions, then a Military Headstone only will be constructed. This then provides scope for a small desktop monument(s) to be erected on the plot recognising the unrelated burial(s).

### 14. Future New Veteran burials:

Future Veteran burials within the Beechworth Public Cemetery will be restricted to the Lawn Cemetery or in the case of the General Cemetery, ashes that are:

- 13.1 Interred within a niche in the Memorial Wall,
- 13.2 Interred within an existing family grave
- 13.3 Placed within the memorial garden; and or
- 13.4 Scattered over an existing family grave.

### 15. OAWG Contact:

OAWG is available during normal office hours, to assist and advise on any matters affecting the commemoration of a veteran. Please address all enquiries to:

Office of Australian War Graves  
P O Box 21  
WODEN - A.C.T. 2606

or telephone:

- (02) 6289 6517 - (Post War Commemoration)
- (02) 6289 6510 - (War Dead Information)
- (02) 6289 6545 - (Maintenance of Memorials)

A copy of the "[Application for a Permit to Erect or Add to a Monument](#)" form will be provided for the OAWG appointed Monumental Stonemasons use.

### Consultation:

During the development and review of this Policy the Trust consulted with:

- the Department of Health - Victoria (DH),
- the Cemeteries and Crematorium Association of Victoria (CCAV),
- the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) - Canberra
- 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 authorise the Chairperson, or authorised delegate to implement this policy and where applicable, consistent with any strategic documents or plans for the Beechworth Cemetery Trust.

### References:

- Occupational Health & Safety Act - 2004 (Vic)
- Occupational Health & Safety Regulation - 2017
- The Australian Standard on Good Governance Principles IV.
- Cemeteries & Crematoria Act - 2003
- Cemeteries & Crematoria Regulations - 2025
- Australian Standards - AS 4204 - 2019 Headstones & Cemetery Monuments
- Beechworth Public Cemetery Policy "[Interment of Cremated Human Remains](#)"
- Beechworth Public Cemetery "Monumental" Policy.
- Office of Australian War Graves Website: <https://www.dva.gov.au/wargraves>
- Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) – Section 27.1
- Authority for post-war commemorations of veterans eligibility: [Australian Commonwealth Government War Cabinet Decision of 10 March 1922.](#)

Adopted: Trust Meeting - 15th September 2025.

Reviewed: