

We've put together some common questions we receive from our community about Cemeteries and the corresponding answers.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAINTAINANCE OF A PLOT?

A relative or designated representative is responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the memorial (headstone or plaque). We are responsible for mowing lawns and general cemetery maintenance.

DO YOU HAVE SPECIAL PLOTS FOR RETURNED VETERANS?

Yes, at Hillcrest and Murupara cemeteries. Anyone who has served in a recognised conflict situation is eligible for an RSA plot and double burials allow a spouse or partner of the deceased to be buried in the same plot. A standard ex-service memorial plaque is available at a subsidised rate through [Veterans' Affairs New Zealand](#).

CAN A CHILD OR OTHER FAMILY MEMBER BE BURIED WITH A VETERAN?

No, unfortunately only the partner or spouse of a veteran can be buried with them in the RSA section.

CAN I RESERVE A PLOT?

For capacity reasons, reserving a plot is not permitted unless you are arranging a burial. When arranging a burial, you may purchase two plots; one for the deceased and one for future use.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I WISH TO ARRANGE A BURIAL OR CREMATION?

We recommend that a Funeral Director is contacted in the first instance to assist with funeral arrangements. It is difficult time for grieving families and the added pressure of following all the regulatory processes can be very distressing. A funeral director can make the process much easier.

Local Funeral Directors (listed in alphabetical order):

- Gateway Funeral Services
07 308 6102
office@gatewayfuneral.co.nz
- Willetts Funeral Services
07 307 1111
willettsfuneral@xtra.co.nz

It is possible to make funeral arrangements directly with Council – please speak to our Cemeteries team to discuss.

CAN I LEAVE FLOWERS ON A GRAVE?

Flowers can be left on grave mounds for up to two weeks after which the mound is levelled and sown in grass (dependant on weather conditions). After this, it is essential that grassed areas are free of obstructions for mowing purposes and to allow the settling to occur at any newly dug plots nearby.

CAN I LEAVE SENTIMENTAL ITEMS ON A GRAVE?

Sentimental items, flowers and adornments must be confined to the concrete berm where the base of the headstone sits and items should not include ceramic or glass of any kind. If broken, it is not only upsetting to next of kin but also dangerous to have broken pieces around grave sites where other visitors often kneel.

HOW DO I ARRANGE A HEADSTONE OR PLAQUE?

A monumental mason or funeral director can help you decide on a suitable memorial and can explain the rules that apply. A headstone permit must be obtained from us prior to installation.

CAN I BUILD A FENCE OR STRUCTURE AROUND THE GRAVESITE?

It is not permissible to build fences, structures or place shell, rocks, landscaping timber or other material on lawn plots. However, some of our cemeteries have old sections where this is allowed. It is best to contact our Cemeteries Team to discuss.

WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES FOR DISINTERMENT?

Before a body can be disinterred, you must obtain a licence from the Ministry of Health. Applications should be submitted to Toi Te Ora Public Health who will assess the application and forward the application to the Ministry of Health, together with a report and recommendations.

Applications for disinterment must be in writing and are usually made by:

- a person(s) related to the deceased;
- the executor of the Will of the deceased;
- a funeral director acting on behalf of either of a relative or executor;
- an iwi/Māori authority acting on behalf of the close relatives or;
- another person acting for the family.

Further Information and an application form can be found [HERE](#).

Once approved by MoE, you will need to complete Council's Disinterment Application and pay the prescribed fee.

CAN I PUT ASHES IN WITH A GRAVE?

Yes, up to three sets of ashes can be placed in a grave that is already used. The applicant must fill out an Interment Application form and pay the prescribed fee. Only our Sexton can dig the hole but the family can fill it in if they wish.

I LIKE THE IDEA OF A NATURAL OR ECO BURIAL. IS THIS POSSIBLE IN THE WHAKATĀNE DISTRICT?

Yes, we are a certified Natural Burial provider and have a natural burial grove located at Hillcrest Cemetery. There are specific protocols to follow when arranging a natural burial. Refer to our website or contact our Cemeteries team to discuss in detail.