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| Cemetery Sector Governance Support Unit newsletter |
| Edition 2, 2023 |
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# Contact us

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| Phone (freecall) 1800 034 280 [Email the Cemetery Sector Governance Support Unit](mailto:cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au) <cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au>  [Visit the Cemeteries and Crematoria webpage](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria>  **Postal address**  Cemetery Sector Governance Support Unit Department of Health  PO Box 4057 Melbourne VIC 3001 |

# Welcome

**Welcome to the Cemetery Sector Governance Support Unit’s newsletter.**

# Class B cemetery trust email addresses

The department’s preferred method of contact is via email because it is an effective and efficient method of communication (and saves trees!).

If you are one of several Class B cemetery trust members and primary contacts who have not advised us of your preferred email address, please do so promptly.

Also, the department prefers to contact trusts via a designated trust email address rather than the primary contact’s personal email address.

Trusts are strongly encouraged to establish a trust email account for the primary contact and other nominated members of the trust to use.

The trust having its own email address will:

* allow primary contacts, secretaries and nominated members shared access to receive and send emails
* enable emails to be actioned in a timely manner when the primary contact is unavailable
* enable trusts to receive emails from the department to pass on to trust members who do not currently have an email address of their own.

Please contact us if you need help setting up an email account.

# Exhumation licence application – new process for paying the fee

**Important notification: From 1 July 2023 cheques or money orders will not be accepted as payment of the prescribed fee for exhumation licence applications**.

Applicants are required to make an electronic funds transfer to the department’s bank account. Details can be found in the [*Making an application for an exhumation licence fact sheet*](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/applying-for-an-exhumation-licence) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/applying-for-an-exhumation-licence> available on the department’s website.

# Conflicts of interest

Cemetery trust members have a duty to place the public interest above their own interests. This helps to maintain the public’s confidence in the ability of trust members to act in the best interests of the trust and Victorian communities.

The unit has developed a new factsheet about conflicts of interest for Class B cemetery trusts. The factsheet explains the different types of conflicts and how to:

* manage conflicts of interest for an existing trust member
* manage conflicts of interest for an applicant seeking appointment
* avoid financial conflicts of interest.

The unit has also developed a conflict of interest management plan template to help trusts ensure appropriate conflict of interest management strategies are in place.

Both documents are available on the [department’s website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-governance) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-governance>.

# Class B cemetery trust member appointments

## New appointment application form and application guidelines

The department has recently updated the *Application for appointment to a Class B cemetery trust* andthe *Application guidelines for appointment to a Class B cemetery trust*, available on the [department’s website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-appointments) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-appointments>.

## Class B cemetery trust member appointment timeframes

Applications for appointment are managed by the department in four annual appointment rounds, with set application deadline dates per round.

The process of appointing cemetery trust members typically takes three to five months from the time the department receives a correctly completed application.

For members seeking reappointment, the department notifies applicable trusts and members by email or post approximately six months before the member’s term expiry date, providing information on the application process and relevant deadline dates.

This timeframe allows adequate time for trusts to complete a recruitment process and submit completed application forms to the department by the deadline date, and for the department to ensure applications from members seeking reappointment can be processed before the member’s term of appointment lapses.

## Appointment round application deadline dates for current terms of office due to expire 31 October 2023

Members seeking reappointment whose term of office expires on 31 October 2023 should submit their applications to their respective trusts for consideration by mid-July 2023.

Trusts must submit to the department completed appointment application forms for members seeking reappointment by **18 August 2023**.

Note: If the department has not received these applications by 18 August 2023, the applications will not be processed before the member’s current term of office expires.

# Tours and recreational activities in cemeteries

The department has received enquiries from some cemetery trusts about requests to run ghost tours in the cemetery.

Any tour or activity within a cemetery should not occur without the approval of the relevant cemetery trust as the land manager appointed by Governor in Council. It is a matter for each trust to decide if it will allow a tour or activity to be held.

Trusts should consider applications for such activities at a trust meeting, with the decision recorded in the minutes and a response provided in writing to the requestor.

When deciding if a trust will allow a tour, it should consider a range of matters including but not limited to:

* cultural and community values
* heritage values of the cemetery
* occupational health and safety within the cemetery
* a risk management plan provided by the tour/activity operator
* current public liability insurance from the tour/activity organiser.

The unit has developed a new fact sheet [*Tours and recreational activities in cemeteries*](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/tours-events-and-recreational-activities-in-cemeteries) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/tours-events-and-recreational-activities-in-cemeteries> to assist trusts when considering a request, available on the department’s website.

# Who is the right of interment holder?

The right of interment holder is the person identified in cemetery trust records as the right of interment holder for a specific place of interment within a public cemetery.

The right of interment holder is not necessarily the same person as the applicant who completed and signed an application form or the person who paid the fee to purchase the right of interment.

There can be one right of interment holder (sole holder) or multiple right of interment holders (joint holders) for a place of interment.

For more information about right of interment refer to Topic 22 of the [*Manual for Victorian Class B cemetery trusts*](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria)<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria> available on the department’s website.

# Grants program

The second round of the 2022–23 Cemetery Grants Program closed on 31 March 2023. Trusts that applied for a grant were notified of the outcome in early May. More than $710,000 was awarded to 52 cemetery trusts.

The current grant round (round 1, 2023–24) will close on **30 November 2023**. As there are limited funds available for grants, priority will be given to applications for funds that address occupational health and safety issues and for those trusts that need IT equipment to improve service delivery.

## Changed closing date for round 1 applications starting in 2024–25

Following feedback from cemetery trusts, the closing date for round 1 grants will be brought forward to 31 October, starting in 2024. The closing dates for grants in the next calendar year will be:

* **round 2 2023–24 will close on 31 March 2024**
* **round 1 2024–25 will close on 31 October 2024**.

The *Cemetery Grants Program guidelines*, *Cemetery grants application form* and *Vegetation removal, destruction or lopping* attachment are available on the department’s [Cemetery Grants Program webpage](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-grants-program) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-grants-program>.

# Small cemetery operations grant

The unit is pleased to announce a new grants program to assist Victoria’s smallest cemetery trusts with the cost of cemetery maintenance and operations. The new grants program will run at the same time as round 1 of the regular Cemetery Grants Program and provide fixed grants of $500 to Class B cemetery trusts that meet the criteria and submit an application.

Cemetery trusts that reported no more than $5,000 in financial assets and no more than five interments in the abstract of accounts for the previous financial year are eligible to apply for a **Small Cemetery Operations Grant** **of $500**. A full list of eligibility criteria and examples of suitable grant requests is available in the *Small Cemetery Operations Grant guidelines*.

To apply, the trust will need to complete and submit a Small Cemetery Operations Grants Program application form by **30 November 2023**. The form is shorter than the regular grants program application form and does not require the trust to attach quotes.

The guidelines and the form can be downloaded from the [department's website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-trust-finance) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-trust-finance>.

# Consumer price index increase to fees 2023

Each year, all cemetery trust fees over $50 are automatically increased by the consumer price index (CPI), effective 1 July. A letter notifying each trust of the increase for 2023 and providing a schedule of updated fees was posted in February. If your trust has not received the updated schedule of fees, please [email the unit](mailto:email%20the%20unit) <cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au> or call 1800 034 280.

# Abstracts of accounts 2022–23

The abstract of accounts is a financial report required from all Class B cemetery trusts under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003*. Cemetery trusts that have no funds or manage closed or inactive cemeteries are still required to submit an abstract each year.

Blank abstract of accounts forms for 2022–23 were sent to the trust’s primary contact in June 2023 by email or via the post where an email address has not been supplied. Trust chairpersons received the same email or a posted reminder about the abstract. Trusts can request a printed copy if necessary by [emailing the unit](mailto:cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au) <cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au> or by calling 1800 034 280.

The Cemeteries and CrematoriaAct requires trusts to submit the abstract by 1 September 2023. Completed abstracts can be [emailed to the unit](mailto:cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au) <cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au> or submitted by post. If your trust chooses to post its abstract, please make sure the trust keeps a copy for its own records.

# Free governance training

Free face-to-face governance training workshops for Class A and Class B cemetery trusts are held across Victoria. These workshops are delivered by the Institute of Community Directors Australia (ICDA), an enterprise of Our Community, on behalf of the department. To register for an upcoming workshop in your area please visit the [ICDA website](https://communitydirectors.com.au/training/victorian-cemetery-trusts-governance-and-operational-training) <https://communitydirectors.com.au/training/victorian-cemetery-trusts-governance-and-operational-training>.

For help with registrations or to arrange a workshop in your area by request, please contact Our Community:

Phone: 1300 137 475

[Email](mailto:learn@ourcommunity.com.au): <learn@ourcommunity.com.au>

## Class B online training

The department has developed a free online training program called Cemetery Essentials for Class B Cemetery Trusts.

If you would like to take part, please [email](mailto:learn@ourcommunity.com.au) Our Community to request an invitation <learn@ourcommunity.com.au>.

Please note: To access the course, participants need to have an email address.

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