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| Assistance payment program for low activity cemeteries |
| Guidelines |
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# Introduction

The assistance payment program for low activity cemeteries (previously known as the small cemetery operations grants program) provides funding to cemetery trusts with limited sources of income as a contribution to the cost of cemetery maintenance and cemetery trust operations. Assistance payments of a fixed amount set by the department are available to Class B cemetery trusts (and municipal councils appointed to manage a cemetery) that meet the eligibility criteria. **The assistance payment amount per trust is $500.** Cemetery trusts can only receive the assistance payment once per financial year.

Only ten cemetery trusts can receive funding per round. Funding will be allocated to the first ten eligible applications received by the department in round 1, with any additional applications held over to round 2 if available. The number of rounds available each year may vary, at the department’s discretion.

The *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* requires Class A cemetery trusts to pay an annual levy to the Victorian Government. The assistance payments are funded by this levy.

Cemetery trusts should note that assistance payments may not be available every year and should **not** be relied on to complete ongoing maintenance or fund ongoing contracts.

# Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to receive an assistance payment, the cemetery trust must meet the following criteria:

1. **No more than $5,000 in financial assets** (in bank accounts, investment accounts, petty cash and perpetual maintenance accounts) reported in the abstract of accounts of the previous financial year. Grant funding received by the trust from the department or other organisations is not counted towards the financial assets threshold.
2. **No more than five interments** (bodily and cremated remains) reported in the abstract of accounts of the previous financial year.
3. Possess a current **ABN**.
4. The most recent **abstracts of accounts** submitted.
5. The trust has not already received an assistance payment in the current financial year.
6. Cemetery trusts managing operational cemeteries **are required to have reviewed their fees in the last two years**.

**Please note:** Trust members cannot be paid to carry out any part of the proposed works. Class B cemetery trust member roles are voluntary and are not eligible for remuneration for their services to the cemetery trust.

# Suitable assistance payment requests

Examples of suitable assistance payment requests include:

* purchase of maintenance supplies (for example, petrol, weed-killer, paint, mulch)
* purchase of equipment costing up to the fixed payment amount (for example, gardening tools, filing cabinet)
* repairs to equipment or replacement parts
* routine groundskeeping (for example, engaging a contractor to mow lawns)
* volunteer working bee expenses (for example, refreshments for volunteers)
* ongoing software licencing or subscription fees
* membership fees for industry bodies or publications
* installation and ongoing costs of internet connection and usage.

# Ineligible assistance payment requests

Assistance payments will **not** be provided for salary and wages of employees or the repair and restoration of memorials. Trust members cannot be paid to provide services, carry out works or receive honorarium payments.

In addition, assistance payments cannot be provided to reimburse cemetery trusts that have expended funds in anticipation of receiving payment. Commencement of work or the purchase of items must not take place until the cemetery trust has received the assistance payment from the department.

Cemetery trusts seeking funding to establish or repair infrastructure or new burial areas, remove or lop trees, purchase equipment such as a lawnmower, grave cover or computer should apply for a grant through the department’s grants program for Class A and Class B cemetery trusts, the [Cemetery grants program](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-grants-program) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/cemetery-grants-program>.

# Application process

To apply for an assistance payment, a cemetery trust must submit a completed Assistance Payment Program for Low Activity Cemeteries application form by **31 October** (round 1) or **31 March** (round 2, held at the department’s discretion) and before the expenditure or work commences.

The cemetery trust will be contacted if additional information is required, although this is likely to delay the application. To avoid such delays please read the information requirements carefully. Unsuccessful applications can be resubmitted in the next round with updated information.

Assistance payment applications are processed twice each financial year. Written notification of the outcome of all applications will be provided in December (round 1) or May (round 2). Assistance payments received must be spent in accordance with the information provided in the application.

# Payment and funding conditions

Approved assistance payments will be deposited into a nominated cemetery trust bank account. Cemetery trusts must account for the expenditure of the assistance payment by advising the department in writing when it is spent and providing copies of invoices/receipts. Any assistance payment transferred to a cemetery trust must appear in the following year’s abstract of accounts against ‘Department of Health grants’.

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