



The Greater Metropolitan
Cemeteries Trust
Lasting memories, peaceful places.

Strategic Plan FY22-24

Sunrise at River Redgum Precinct, Northern Memorial Park.
Photo taken by Ismail Abuleela,

Contents

Introduction	3
Building on our history	4
About Us	6
Our Structure	8
The Cemetery Lifecycle	10
Our Service Model	12
Guiding Principles	14
FY22-24 Strategy	15

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Introduction

Established by the Victorian Government in 2010, The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) is a community focussed organisation operating 19 cemeteries and memorial parks in Melbourne's metropolitan region.

GMCT is accountable to the state government and to the people of Victoria. We are therefore pleased to share with you our strategic vision and roadmap for 2022-2024.

The role we play in our communities is fundamental: providing front-line care for those who have lost a loved one, and looking after those they have lost. Our services provide comfort and closure to families and individuals in their times of need, and our cemeteries provide peaceful places for commemoration and reflection.

Situated in the north, east and west of Melbourne, GMCT cemeteries account for more than 650 hectares of public space. As our population grows and Melbourne's urban footprint expands, these open spaces will be maintained as important community assets for generations to come.

As the architects of these special places, it is vital for us to reflect our city's rich cultural diversity and support the customs, traditions and funerary practices of its people. Our dedicated staff work hand-in-hand with partner organisations and community groups to ensure the sustainability and longevity of these core cultural practices.

Our public cemeteries are archives of lives lived, and we are the committed custodians of the history and heritage they represent. Although our work is firmly rooted in the cultural history of our city, we also look forward to a future that empowers all Victorians to make informed end-of-life decisions, and that provides new and sustainable ways to commemorate our loved ones.

Our cemeteries and memorial parks have been here for generations; we're here for our communities now, whenever they need us; and we're planning ahead to ensure our cemeteries and memorial parks will be preserved for generations to come.

This Strategic Plan reflects the goals we have set to ensure we honour and embrace our multicultural city's history and heritage, serve the communities who need us now, and plan ahead for memorial parks that will meet the changing needs of future Victorians.

Our Strategic Plan has been informed by ongoing consultation with our communities, visitors, GMCT staff, members of the funeral industry, cultural, religious and special interest groups, members of our Community Advisory Committee, local residents and local and state government.

Each year, GMCT develops an Annual Plan that outlines the initiatives that will underpin the Strategic Plan.

Building on our history

The formation of GMCT in 2010 brought together eight existing cemetery trusts responsible for hundreds of years of collective history and cultural heritage.

We are responsible for the care and maintenance of 19 cemeteries and memorial parks that form an arc across Melbourne, from Werribee in the west to Emerald in the east. Many of these cemeteries have provided services to their local communities for more than 150 years.

GMCT is proud to carry forward the traditions that have developed across these unique sites, and to provide generations of Victorians with compassionate service and clear guidance during their times of need.

Our cemeteries provide peaceful resting places for many of Melbourne's prominent historical figures, including Dame Nellie Melba and her father, David Mitchell. Our city's history is important to us, but we also strive to adapt to evolving community needs as Melbourne continues to rapidly grow and change.

We play an integral role in the wider community services system. We work hard to ensure the services we provide are responsive to the diverse range of cultural beliefs and practices we encounter. In recent years GMCT has played a more active role in community conversations about planning ahead. Increasingly, we are exploring the place of digital technologies to meet the emerging needs of our communities.

As our communities and religious groups continue to evolve, our priority over the next three years will be to ensure we meet their needs and expectations now and into the future. We will continue to listen to our communities and explore new and innovative approaches to remembrance, balancing innovation with our role as custodians of our communities' shared history, actively integrating heritage considerations into master-planning activities.

Above all, our core focus remains constant and rooted in the present – providing exceptional, compassionate service to all those who have lost someone, and looking after those they have lost.





...and looking forward

Since our inception in 2010, GMCT's strategic direction has followed a roadmap aimed at integrating the eight original trusts, finding efficiencies and improving the ways we work together across a large geographical area.

During this period we have implemented a range of significant initiatives and improvements across our operations and corporate governance frameworks. We have developed a land strategy, reviewed and reconfigured vital business functions, streamlined and improved the integrity of our operational processes and service delivery, implemented significant new technology platforms, and improved our employee engagement and training across the organisation. Importantly, we have established a firm foundation based on customer care and community engagement, positioning GMCT as a vital frontline provider in the community services sector.

We are proud of the team's hard work and commitment to our organisational values and strategic priorities. Our culture has been built on firm foundations, and this has provided a strong stepping-off point as we move towards a future grounded in an excellent customer experience and strong community networks, positioning us as a trusted partner for our communities, stakeholder groups and the funeral sector.

The coming years will focus on integrating and leveraging digital technologies to ensure we continue to deliver the best possible customer experience. We are working hard to build a responsive and respectful suite of services, and to continually improve our processes.

With a renewed emphasis on the relationships we build with customers, families and communities over time, we will invest significantly in customer insights and ongoing community engagement to ensure our actions, decisions and initiatives align with current and emerging community needs and expectations.

We will continue to set a high benchmark with respect to our central role within the broader sector, particularly in supporting class B cemetery trusts and building strong relationships with funeral directors, stonemasons, and other industry stakeholders.

About Us

Our 19 cemeteries and memorial parks, spread across greater metropolitan Melbourne, have been here for generations. Many of these cemeteries are sites of cultural and historical significance, and GMCT proudly preserves the shared history of our communities for the benefit of future generations.

We are stewards of these special places, appointed by state government to maintain them, and the traditions they represent, in perpetuity.

We provide burial, cremation and memorialisation services to meet the needs of all the communities we have the privilege of working with.

We also provide a variety of venues, including spaces for ceremonies and receptions to accommodate a variety of services and cultural practices, with cafes and floristry available at selected sites.

We look ahead to ensure the rich and diverse cultural traditions that take place on our sites can adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.

We're developing new memorial parks and new, sustainable memorial types, embracing modern technology to ensure future Victorians can count on us too.

We invite feedback and input into our many projects and initiatives, giving Victorians the opportunity to understand and contribute to our decision-making processes.

Our organisation embraces the diversity of the communities we work with and reflect this in the people we employ. We come from a range of backgrounds and age groups, and bring different perspectives to our work, united by a clear commitment to providing compassionate service.

Our purpose

We care for the living
by taking care of moments
that matter.

Our vision

Lasting memories,
peaceful places.

Our mission

We provide the final care
for your loved ones, with
dignity and kindness.
We respect all peoples, our
heritage, our communities
and the environment.

Our Values



Whenever our support is needed, we are ready to be there, responding with sensitivity and kindness.

We consider every situation to be unique, and strive to understand the needs of customers and colleagues so we can put them at the heart of everything we do.



We respect the rights, traditions and beliefs of every individual, family, community and culture we work with.

We respect, support and recognise our colleagues so we can empower one another to do the same for the communities we serve.



We have the courage to hold ourselves to account, and recognise our individual and collective responsibility for ethical, honest and considered conduct.

We hold ourselves and each other to the highest standards of professionalism and compliance.



Our cemeteries and memorial parks have been here for generations, and will be here for generations to come.

We use our resources wisely, plan effectively, and look after our environment and ourselves to ensure that GMCT contributes to a more sustainable future.

Our Structure

Our structure

GMCT is classified as a class A cemetery trust under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003*. We are responsible to the Minister for Health and governed by trust members appointed by state government.

Trust members are accountable for the good governance of the organisation, including:

- setting the strategic objectives of the trust
- determining priorities and major projects
- reviewing the progress and performance of the organisation in meeting its strategic objectives
- risk management.

Trust members participate in a number of committees. These trust committees review and provide advice in relation to the responsibilities and commitments of the organisation.

The current trust committees are:

- Community Advisory Committee
- Audit and Risk Management Committee
- Finance and Investment Committee
- Executive Performance and Remuneration Committee.

Our model

GMCT is a self-funded, not-for-profit entity, with potential to receive funding for specific initiatives through the Department of Health cemetery grants program. We are committed to managing costs, income and investments strategically, ensuring the financial stability of our enterprise and honouring our responsibility to maintain our cemeteries in perpetuity.

Proceeds from the sale of products and services go directly into funding the delivery of burial, cremation and memorialisation services, capital works, and our perpetual maintenance obligations set out in the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003*. The price of products and services is, in turn, regulated through the Department of Treasury and Finance guidelines.

This operating model necessitates a strategic approach to managing our investments which helps to grow our perpetual maintenance reserves, and also empowers us to acquire land to meet demands for cemetery space as Melbourne's population continues to expand.

We implement strategies and plans to manage costs, balancing income with outgoings and fluctuations in the economy to ensure the long-term sustainability of our enterprise.

Our communities

GMCT is proud to serve a diverse range of communities in one of the most multicultural and cosmopolitan cities in the world. Each year, we welcome over a million visitors to our sites and support over twelve thousand families, representing a wide a range of traditional and contemporary religious, cultural and social expectations.

GMCT is committed to ensuring our cemeteries remain relevant to their local communities. We achieve this by working closely with Melbourne's diverse cultural, religious and special interest groups, including dedicated friends groups associated with our various cemeteries.

Our cemeteries and memorial parks are invaluable community assets, providing local residents with stunning public parks. As guardians of history and heritage, we share, celebrate and hold the stories of those laid to rest, who remain in our care, in perpetuity.

An integral part of GMCT's community engagement program is our Community Advisory Committee – a group of committed volunteers who represent the wider community and importantly, assist GMCT in identifying and understanding the needs and preferences of the communities we serve. They ensure our actions, initiatives and decisions are informed by community input and contribute invaluable local knowledge, such as religious, cultural and heritage perspectives.

At a glance



19

Public cemeteries and memorial parks across Melbourne's north, east and west



More than

4,500

burials per year



More than

6,700

cremations per year



More than

500

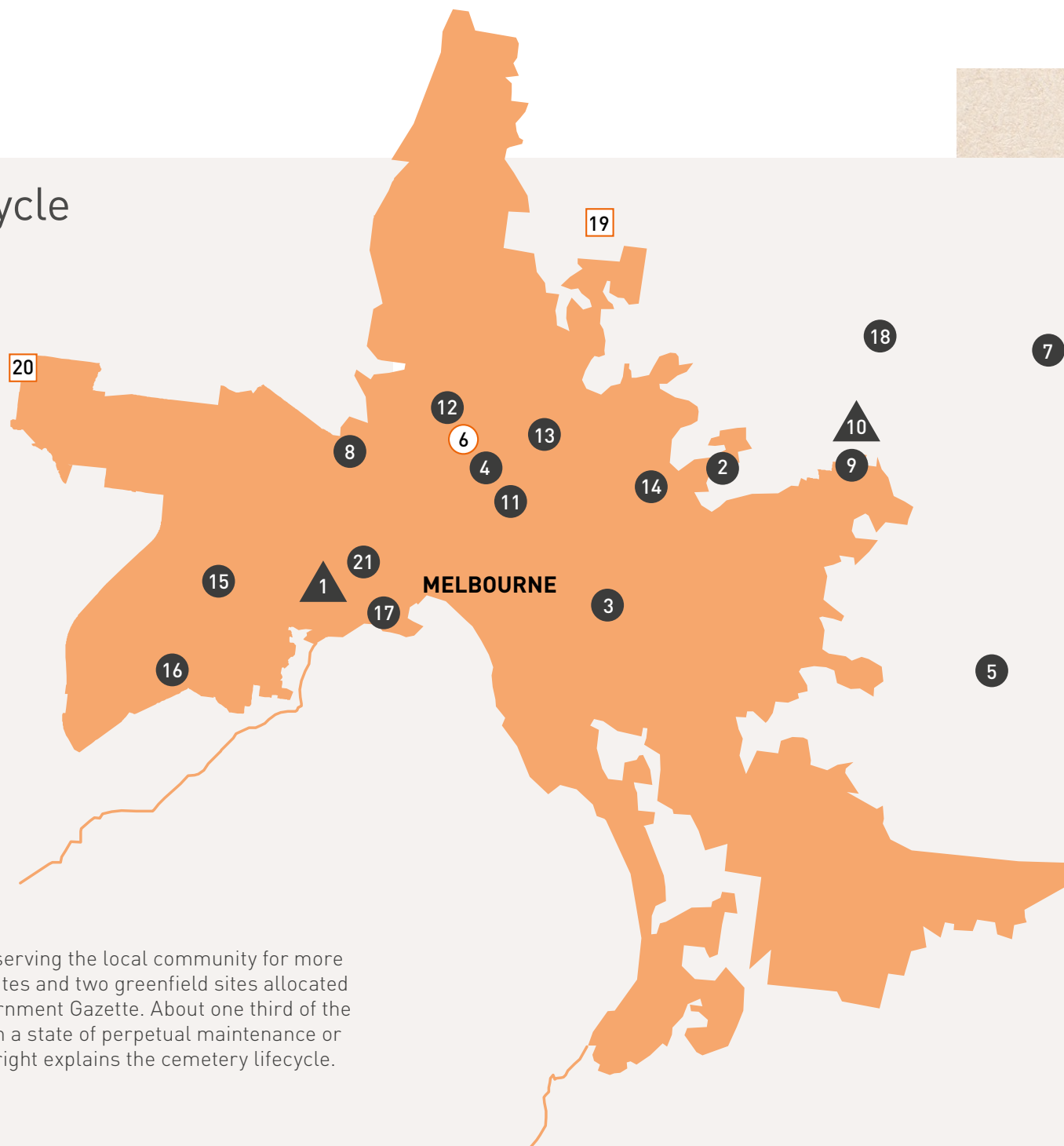
mausoleum interments

The Cemetery Lifecycle

- Corporate head office
- ▲ Regional office
- GMCT sites
- Greenfield sites

Cemetery lifecycle

A number of GMCT cemeteries have been serving the local community for more than 150 years. Today GMCT manages 19 sites and two greenfield sites allocated for cemetery use under the Victorian Government Gazette. About one third of the cemeteries managed by GMCT are either in a state of perpetual maintenance or have almost reached capacity. The text at right explains the cemetery lifecycle.



Site

Lifecycle stage

1	Altona Memorial Park	Active
2	Andersons Creek Cemetery	Transitional
3	Burwood Cemetery	Perpetual
4	Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery	Perpetual
5	Emerald Cemetery	Transitional
6	Fawkner Memorial Park	Active
7	Healesville Cemetery	Active
8	Keilor Cemetery	Active
9	Lilydale Lawn Cemetery	Perpetual
10	Lilydale Memorial Park	Active

* GMCT operates and maintains this cemetery on behalf of Maribyrnong City Council.

Site

Lifecycle stage

11	Northcote Cemetery	Perpetual
12	Northern Memorial Park	Active
13	Preston Cemetery	Transitional
14	Templestowe Cemetery	Perpetual
15	Truganina Cemetery	Perpetual
16	Werribee Cemetery	Transitional
17	Williamstown Cemetery	Transitional
18	Yarra Glen Cemetery	Active
19	Plenty Valley	Concept
20	Harkness	Establishment
21	Footscray Cemetery*	Perpetual

1



2



3



4



5

Concept

The initial identification of need or opportunity and identification and acquisition of new land for cemetery use.

Establishment

Planning for the development of new greenfield sites and acquired land.

Active

The operation of cemeteries that have high visitation and interments and a wide range of services.

Transitional

Lessening requirement for infrastructure, continued but declining interment and services, medium visitation.

Perpetual

Cemeteries with minimal space available and low visitation rates, requiring ongoing maintenance and a focus on heritage.

Our Service Model

The GMCT service model is comprised of four distinct functions, each with its own focus:

- Past
- Present
- Future
- Support and Leadership.

Past – to fulfil our purpose for those already in our care

‘The Past’ relates to maintaining our established cemeteries and memorial parks, and the legacies of those interred or cremated there. This includes improving the accessibility and quality of important historical records, and the ongoing management of our investment funds for perpetual maintenance of these cemeteries.

Present – to fulfil our purpose for the families we care for today

‘The Present’ is delivery of burial and cremation services, including enquiries, bookings, and client care.

Future – to fulfil our purpose to care for future communities

‘The Future’ is focused on designing new cemeteries and memorial parks, as well as developing grave and mausolea stock to meet community needs for Victoria’s future generations.

Support and Leadership – to sustain the operation of our business and the sector

‘Support and Leadership’ is comprised of all activities required for the delivery of the above functions and GMCT’s purpose, including finance, human resources, governance, communications, risk management, technology and research. In addition, this includes strategies informing the leadership role we play in supporting the sector and Class B cemeteries.

The nature of the cemetery lifecycle, which moves through several phases, from concept to active to perpetual, has informed our approach to strategic planning. This model enables us to understand how each function contributes to our purpose.

Past

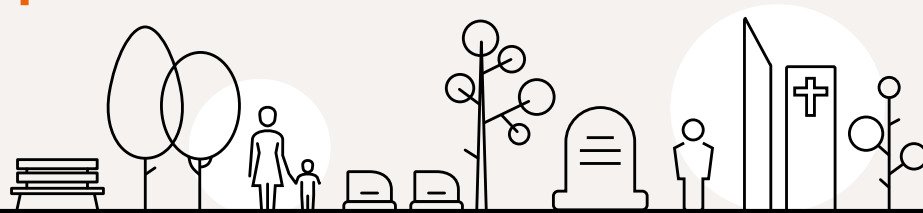
We’re maintaining our historical cemeteries and memorial parks that have been here for generations



- Perpetual maintenance
- Family history
- History and heritage
- Storytelling
- Investment.

Present

We're here for our communities
when they need us most



- Customer experience
- Memorialisation
- Cemetery operations and service delivery
- Community engagement, outreach and events
- Support services.

Future

We're planning ahead for
generations to come



- Planning and design
- Community consultation
- Land acquisition
- Construction
- Investment.



Guiding Principles

Service

We recognise that the experience of losing someone is deeply personal, and we aim to provide families experiencing loss with exceptional, accessible and compassionate service in the moments that matter most.



Community

We put the diverse communities we serve at the centre of our plans, both as key influencers and primary beneficiaries of an informed, needs-based approach that aims to generate community value above and beyond the delivery of essential services.



Sustainability

As a long-term enterprise with a legacy of 150 years, and a clear remit to plan ahead for future generations, the sustainability of our business is a key measure of success and a cornerstone of our strategic approach.



FY22-24 Strategy

Past

- We maintain our sites in perpetuity at standards that balance community expectations and financial sustainability.
- We will identify and rectify gaps or errors in historical records where appropriate.

Present

- We ensure that 'moments that matter' in service delivery and design meet community expectations.
- We have the right people, processes and systems in place to manage operational risks.
- We strengthen our relationships with the families we serve.

Future

- We engage with our communities for data and insights to serve communities of the future.
- We provide products and services for Victoria's diverse communities when and where they're needed.
- We embrace research and partnerships that enhance community value.

Support and Leadership

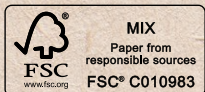
- We invest appropriately in people, processes and systems to support our culture and fulfill our purpose.
- We continually adapt to meet evolving community needs through business improvement initiatives.
- We support the sector and Class B cemeteries.

Annual plans are developed detailing the actions that will be undertaken to support the strategy in each year (including key performance indicators).




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Printed on recycled paper.

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