



The Greater Metropolitan
Cemeteries Trust
Lasting memories, peaceful places.

Strategic Plan FY25-27

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CEO and Trust Chair's foreword

At the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) we are dedicated to the compassionate care of our community.

As our communities grow and change over time, we can only achieve this through strategic, long-term planning. Our next three-year Strategic Plan focuses on meeting their evolving and diverse needs long into the future, whilst continuing to enhance our service delivery via innovation.

Understanding and connecting with our customers is fundamental to providing compassionate service. We are focused on developing closer, stronger connections by better understanding and responding to their diverse needs and expectations. We will improve our value proposition through products and services catered to customer preferences and improving communication to make them more accessible. We will also continue to engage with communities through events and initiatives that expand our value beyond the provision of deathcare.

Digital technology will be key in bringing us closer to our customers. Many people's first connection with GMCT is digital, and modern customers want to be informed and participate in this way. GMCT will continue to streamline and digitise our services, by putting information and choice in the hands of the people we serve. We will also work towards providing better digital tools for staff, enabling a more connected workforce and embedding operational efficiencies across the organisation and our network of memorial parks.

Serving our expanding communities is not just a matter of innovation. We will also need to expand and develop our sites to cater for growing needs. Significant greenfield development will be at the core of our new strategic plan. The development of new sites at Harkness, Emerald and Altona demonstrates how we are servicing the growing population of metropolitan Melbourne. The new cemetery at Harkness will be the largest established in Victoria for the last 100 years. Our masterplan reimagines the role of the cemetery as an innovative, multi-purpose space designed to adapt to our diverse community's evolving needs for more than 100 years to come.



Andrew Eriksen and Michael Doery



Funky Shirt Fridays, an initiative to support mental health.

Through meticulous planning and unwavering commitment, we are dedicated to ensuring responsible financial management that extends into perpetuity. With a steadfast focus on transparent and prudent decision-making, we aim to balance affordability with service delivery and product availability. This will allow us to continue delivering compassionate service to those who have lost someone and looking after those they have lost.

The cemetery sector exists to serve the people of Victoria, and we are best able to do this when we collaborate. As a Class A cemetery trust, we have a leadership role within the sector. We guide our innovation agenda through research, gaining insight into the needs and expectations of the community. We will continue to support and share knowledge with Class B cemetery trusts across Victoria and foster stronger relationships with our key stakeholders.

Sustainability is one of our core values, reflected in our daily activity and long-term planning. We have begun offering sustainable alternatives such as natural burials at Lilydale Memorial Park and Healesville Cemetery. Building on this, we have embedded sustainable practices in the design of the new cemetery at Harkness and continue to place a significant emphasis on environmental management practices.

We have a broader responsibility to invest in educating the community and leading the adoption of sustainable practices. We take this on as a collaborative leader in our sector and a values-driven organisation that understands our social responsibilities.

Cognisant of our social impact, we are committed to collaborating with First Nations peoples, who have been custodians of the land we operate on since long before our cemeteries were established. We have recently joined the Reconciliation Action Program (RAP) with the endorsement of our Reflect RAP. The RAP will strengthen relationships and improve respect, understanding and opportunities for First Nations peoples. As part of our commitment to expanding and embracing the diversity of our workforce, we have also developed a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (DISAP) and implemented a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) and a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP). These commitments will remain front of mind as we chart our course through the next three years and beyond.

We are excited to embark on the new strategic plan, with a well-planned and considered approach. This will enable us to continue improving and enhancing our value to our evolving and diverse communities.

Andrew Eriksen

*CEO, The Greater Metropolitan
Cemeteries Trust*

Michael Doery

*Chair, The Greater Metropolitan
Cemeteries Trust*

About The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust

Our 21 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 reflects 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 vision

Our peaceful places and compassionate support provide solace and belonging so families and friends can cherish and preserve the lasting memories of their loved ones.

Our purpose

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



Compassion

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.



Respect

We respect the rights, traditions and benefits 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.



Integrity

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.



Sustainability

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.

At a glance



21

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



More than 5,700

burials per year



More than 7,000

cremations per year



More than 700

mausoleum interments



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

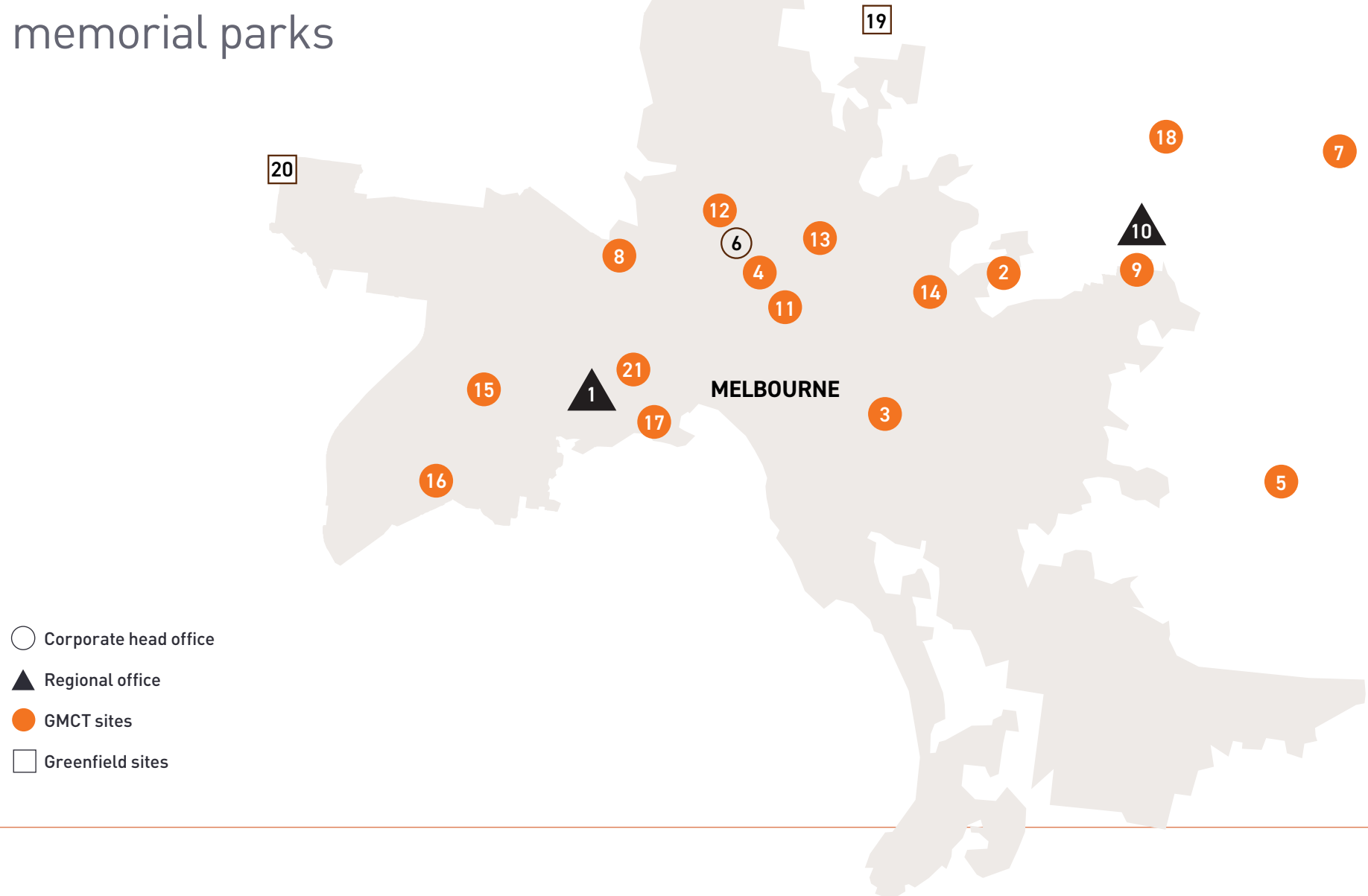
GMCT is proud to serve a diverse range of communities in one of the most multicultural and cosmopolitan cities in the world. Each year, we welcome over a million visitors to our sites and support over twelve thousand families, representing a wide range of traditional and contemporary religious, cultural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

GMCT cemeteries and memorial parks



GMCT cemeteries and memorial parks

Cemetery lifecycle

About one third of the cemeteries managed by GMCT are either in a state of perpetual maintenance or have almost reached peak capacity. Several GMCT cemeteries have been serving their local communities for more than 150 years.

The cemetery lifecycle includes:

1. **Concept:** Identifying the need or opportunity and then identifying and acquiring new land for cemetery use.
2. **Establishment:** Planning for the development of new greenfield sites and acquired land.
3. **Active:** Operating cemeteries with high visitation, interments and a wide range of services.
4. **Transitional:** Lessening requirement for infrastructure, continued but declining interment and services and medium visitation.
5. **Perpetual:** Ongoing maintenance and a focus on heritage for cemeteries with minimal space available and low visitation rates.

	Site	Lifecycle stage	Expected stage 2027
1	Altona Memorial Park	Active	Active
2	Andersons Creek Cemetery	Transitional	Perpetual
3	Burwood Cemetery	Perpetual	Perpetual
4	Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery	Perpetual	Perpetual
5	Emerald Cemetery	Transitional	Transitional
6	Fawkner Memorial Park	Active	Active
7	Healesville Cemetery	Active	Transitional
8	Keilor Cemetery	Active	Transitional
9	Lilydale Lawn Cemetery	Perpetual	Perpetual
10	Lilydale Memorial Park	Active	Active
11	Northcote Cemetery	Perpetual	Perpetual
12	Northern Memorial Park	Active	Active
13	Preston Cemetery	Transitional	Transitional
14	Templestowe Cemetery	Perpetual	Perpetual
15	Truganina Cemetery	Perpetual	Perpetual
16	Werribee Cemetery	Transitional	Transitional
17	Williamstown Cemetery	Transitional	Transitional
18	Yarra Glen Cemetery	Active	Transitional
19	Plenty Valley	Concept	Establishment
20	Harkness	Establishment	Active
21	Footscray Cemetery*	Perpetual	Perpetual

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



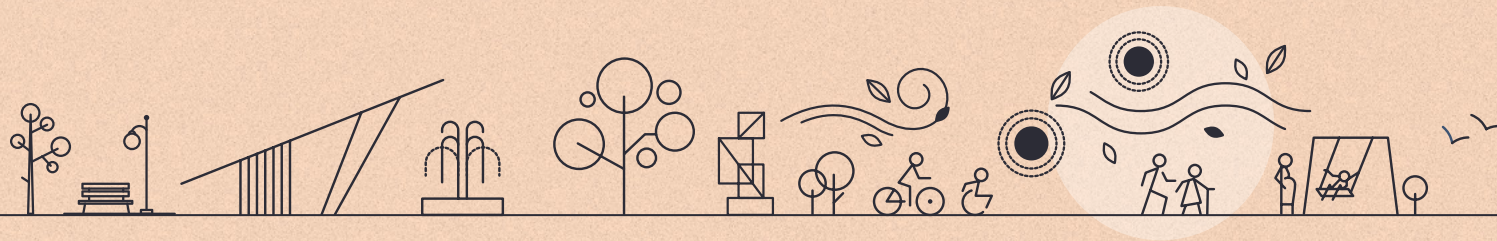
- Perpetual maintenance
- Family history
- History and heritage
- Storytelling
- Investment

Present

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

Future

We're planning ahead for
generations to come



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

- Planning and design
- Community consultation
- Digital enhancement
- Construction
- Innovation

Key Challenges and Risks

GMCT takes a proactive, strategic approach to identifying, analysing and managing all risks.

In 2024, the Senior Leadership Team and the Audit and Risk Committee worked to align the strategic planning process with strategic risk management, enabling us to create a comprehensive and forward-looking risk management plan.

GMCT remains aware of the changing economic environment facing the industry, particularly in relation to escalating construction costs to deliver products coupled with escalating cost-of-living expenses facing customers.

GMCT will continue to monitor proposed changes in government policy and actively participate in industry forums in relation to any proposed changes therein so that the interests of all of the communities we serve are tabled for due consideration.

Through this process, we have identified the key themes outlined below:

Growth and development

As Melbourne's population grows and diversifies, so does the need for essential infrastructure and services. The potential for demand growth to outpace supply is a risk all essential infrastructure and service providers must consider. Pressure on land supply and increasingly complex customer and community expectations are issues GMCT is facing and will face into the future. Strategic planning, community engagement and design all play a role in mitigating these risks.



Key Challenges and Risks

Staff attraction and retention

The challenge of attracting and retaining staff is an emerging risk in certain areas of GMCT's business, such as Project Management or Plant Operation, where other major projects may monopolise qualified staff.

Backfilling these positions with contract staff is costly and is not our preferred option, as this may diminish the skill base of our workforce.

Climate impacts

The impacts of climate change, and compliance obligations associated with mitigating climate change, are an increasing risk and challenge for organisations like GMCT.

While we make every effort to minimise environmental impacts, cremations and burials have an impact that is difficult to offset. In addition, changing climatic conditions and frequent severe weather events may affect assets, vegetation and customer experience. GMCT has recently replaced a number of capital assets to help us achieve compliance with climate goals. We will continue to design for climate resilience, invest in technology and strive to become industry leaders in this field.



Strategic Plan FY25-27 – Strategic Objectives

Past

- › We manage our sites in response to community expectations and ensure we align our financial resources to meet our perpetual obligations
- › We will continue to mature our record management, data ecosystem and management practices for historical records

Present

- › We offer diverse products and services to meet customer needs and preferences
- › We have the right people, processes, systems and equipment to meet growing customer needs through responsible operations.
- › We will continue to educate and engage our customers and stakeholders

Future

- › We will plan, develop and activate our existing and greenfield sites for our growing community base
- › We will promote belonging and inclusion through innovative design of our sites as accessible and sustainable community assets
- › We engage with our communities for data and insights to serve communities of the future
- › We embrace strategies and partnerships that create positive social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts to enable future communities to thrive

Support and Leadership

- › We are well planned, structured and resourced to fulfil our purpose
- › We provide collaborative leadership and support to the sector including 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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