

# GMCT Sustainability Strategy

## 2025 – 2030



The Greater Metropolitan  
Cemeteries Trust

# Acknowledgement of Country

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GMCT (Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust) operates across the lands of both the Bunurong People and the Wurundjeri People, and we acknowledge them as the Traditional Custodians. We also pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.



# Trust Chair and CEO message

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## Caring for and managing memorial parklands across Melbourne, the very nature of The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust's role connects us to the land.

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The Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples cared for this land for thousands of years before it was entrusted to us. While we are custodians for only a moment in time, the action we take now to protect and restore it can have a positive impact for many years to come.

We are responsible for the histories and futures of our memorial parks, looking after those who are in our care, and supporting the communities in which we operate. It is not a responsibility we take lightly.

In the provision of products and services, the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust consumes gas and electricity and are significant users of resources such as concrete, asphalt and stone.

These impacts, in addition to increasing environmental legislative requirements and customer demand for more sustainable services and products, mean we must take further steps today to realise the sustainable cemeteries of tomorrow.

Sustainability is one of our core values and, through dedicated sustainability strategies since 2017, has remained a strategic focus for our organisation. In that time, we have undertaken work to upgrade our facilities and vehicle fleet to make them more efficient, incorporated

recycled material into building and asset renewal projects, and introduced ways to power our sites more efficiently.

However, so that we can continue to meet customer, community, and government expectations over the coming years, we need to bring renewed focus to this work.

We want our sites to be places where we use natural resources responsibly, actively minimise the impact of our operations, and enrich the community and environment.

This Sustainability Strategy brings a structure and framework to this vision, setting out our intentions over the next five years.

To drive and measure our progress each year, we will set, and report against, 12-month implementation plans and metrics. This will not only show us where we are making progress but also help us manage and mitigate challenges we may face along the way. Ongoing collaboration with our sector, further investment, and innovation will all have influence on the pace at which we can move.

We don't underestimate the work ahead of us but are determined to build on the achievements we have already made. We look forward to progressing this necessary and important work for the land and our communities.



Michael Dorey  
Chair, GMCT



Andrew Eriksen  
CEO GMCT



# About GMCT

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The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) is a not-for-profit, community-led organisation that provides burial, cremation, and interment services each year to more than 12,500 families across a broad spectrum of communities, cultures, and faiths. Established as a Class A Cemetery Trust in 2010, GMCT is responsible for managing

19 memorial parks and cemetery spaces in the north, east and west of Melbourne, with two more in development – all spaces and assets which GMCT is responsible for managing in perpetuity. GMCT is regulated under the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 (the Act) and is accountable to the Minister for Health and the people of Victoria.



# Creating Sustainable Cemeteries

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Cemeteries have cultural, social, historical, and environmental significance and provide an opportunity to change how we think about sustainability in life, death, and what we leave behind.

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Traditionally, cemeteries have occupied large areas of land that, while intended to be serene and solemn, are focused on permanence and preservation.

Rather than simply occupying space, sustainable cemeteries are designed to be dynamic ecosystems where trees, flowers, and wildlife flourish, and people can find solace.

They become an ongoing part of the landscape, where the earth is cared for, restored, and renewed over time, providing wildlife habitats that serve as a nature-rich parks for the community to enjoy in perpetuity.

In creating sustainable cemeteries, key ecological principles need to be followed. These are:

- Responsible land use and minimal land disturbance
- Environmental and cultural land management practices
- Optimised use of resources (such as energy, materials, and water)
- Reducing the ecological footprint of burials
- Focus on a healthy environment for all

GMCT's own Sustainability Strategy has been informed by these principles, ensuring that our care for the land remains central to our ongoing sustainability efforts.

While we are not required to report our progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, these have also been considered in the development of this strategy.

# GMCT Sustainability Strategy

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## Purpose

This Strategy will guide our organisation as we embed environmental, social, and economic sustainability into our operations, planning, and community engagement. It will ensure we manage our sites in a way that preserves

and restores the land, honours history and culture, and meets the changing needs of our communities. Not only for today, but for generations to come.





# Our Guiding Principles

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## Care for our community

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We strive to always meet the needs of the communities we serve.

## Protect our environment

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We design, develop, maintain, and restore memorial parklands in ways that respect and enhance their unique environmental qualities.

## Connection to country

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We uphold our responsibilities as custodians of the land, recognising and respecting its traditional owners.

## Responsible governance

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We meet our legislative obligations, while adapting to emerging sustainability approaches.

## Financial sustainability

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We operate in ways that ensure our services can be provided equitably, and in perpetuity.

# Our focus areas:

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## Community & Social Impact

Better connecting communities  
with our memorial parks

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### Objectives:

- Improve community perception of memorial parks through positive engagement and education.
- Develop community understanding of sustainable interment and memorialisation options.
- Improve environmental and social outcomes through research, advocacy, and partnerships.



## Planning & design

Creating sustainable spaces and  
enhancing our local environment

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### Objectives:

- Improve land-use efficiency through better planning and management techniques.
- Enhance and evolve our memorial parks in perpetuity through innovative design practices.
- Preserve and restore the ecology, biodiversity, and waterways of the sites we care for and manage.



## Products, Services & Operations

Embedding sustainability  
into everything we do

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### Objectives:

- Progressively work towards achieving net zero emissions by reducing carbon impacts across our sites.
- Achieve improved environmental outcomes by embedding sustainability into all decision making and service delivery processes.
- Mitigate climate risks and improve GMCT's climate resilience.





# Community & Social Impact

Better connecting communities with our memorial parks

With expansive green areas, beautiful gardens, and plenty of walking, running, and cycling paths, our memorial parks are not only places of remembrance – they are also vital community spaces.

## Objectives:

- Improve community perception of memorial parks through positive engagement and education.
- Develop community understanding of sustainable interment and memorialisation options.
- Improve environmental and social outcomes through research, advocacy, and partnerships.

We want to challenge existing perceptions of memorial parks by creating spaces that are inclusive, accessible, and sustainable. This includes upgrading existing perpetual sites to be more inviting and biodiverse, as well as designing new sites with versatile ceremonial spaces that can be enjoyed by all.

Beyond creating and enhancing physical spaces, we also want to better connect with our communities so we can deliver the products, services, and spaces that meet their changing needs.

Hosting events and activities that encourage people to visit our sites, regularly seeking community feedback, and connecting with local libraires, schools, and councils are just some of the ways we can continue to build these closer connections.

At a sector level, we will continue to collaborate with Class A and Class B cemeteries to find shared solutions to the unique sustainability challenges our sector faces. We will also look for further opportunities to partner with research organisations who share our aspirations for creating the more sustainable cemeteries of the future.



# Planning & design

Creating sustainable spaces and enhancing our local environment

GMCT is responsible for the care and management of 600 hectares of memorial parklands across Melbourne's north, east, and west. Inherent in that role is a need to preserve, restore, and enhance the land we operate on.

## Objectives:

- Improve land-use efficiency through long-term planning and management techniques.
- Enhance and evolve our memorial parks in perpetuity through innovative design practices.
- Preserve and restore the ecology, biodiversity, and waterways of the sites we care for and manage.

Thanks to thoughtful planning, we have land available to service Melbourne for the next 100 years. Our focus is now on how we use that land as efficiently and sensitively as possible, while also being mindful of the changes to our climate that we will see over that time.

As we develop new sites, we will restore local ecosystems, support biodiversity, protect waterways, and increasing the tree canopy – helping to reduce the urban heat island effects often caused by traditional, concrete heavy cemeteries. For our existing sites, we will apply the same principles, carefully balancing environmental improvements with respect for their histories and landscapes.

A sustainable focus will guide our planning and design decisions so that we continue to build and improve our assets in climate-conscious ways, reduce the risks often associated with traditional burial practices, and manage natural resources responsibly.

Water supply, soil management, and biodiversity are critical to our operations. We aim to reduce water use by choosing drought tolerant plants, using recycled water where possible, and designing our sites to capture and reuse stormwater through water sensitive urban design. Priority will also be given to native plantings to enhance the climate resilience of our sites, create maintenance efficiencies, and enhance our local ecosystems.



# Products, Services, & Operations

Embedding sustainability into everything we do

We want to support Victoria's effort to reach net zero emissions by 2045 by reducing our own carbon footprint. While significant reductions will require sector collaboration, investment, and innovation, there are steps we can take now that will have a positive impact.

## Objectives:

- Progressively work towards achieving net zero emissions by reducing carbon impacts across our sites.
- Achieve improved environmental outcomes by embedding sustainability into all decision making and service delivery processes.
- Mitigate climate risks and improve GMCT's climate resilience.

We have begun transitioning our sites to be more sustainable by using renewable energy, installing solar panels, choosing recycled materials and efficient infrastructure design and construction methods, and electrifying our plant and fleet.

Investigating and implementing more carbon efficient disposition practices and making these products and services more readily available for customers will play an important role in this work. So too will using data and insights so that we can better anticipate changes in demand, population, and climate.

Increased severe weather events pose a significant risk to our assets, vegetation, and the experience of our customers. Already we are seeing the impacts of an increasingly hot and dry climate, which bring fire warnings, threats of reduced operations or site closures, as well as the health and safety risk this poses to our customers and staff.

To prepare for and adapt to these changes, we have developed a Climate Resilience Plan. This will continue to guide our emissions reductions as well as the steps we need to take to strengthen the resilience of our people, sites, and services.





### Contact information



1300 022 298



[enquiries@gmct.com.au](mailto:enquiries@gmct.com.au)



[gmct.com.au](http://gmct.com.au)