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| Cemetery sector newsletter |
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# Contact us

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| Email outline | Email <cemeteries@health.vic.gov.au> |
| Telephone outline | Phone 1800 034 280 |
| Internet outline | [Cemeteries and Crematoria website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria> |
| Mailbox outline | Cemeteries and CrematoriaDepartment of Health PO Box 4057MELBOURNE VIC 3001 |

# Welcome

Welcome to the Department of Health’s cemetery sector newsletter.

# New manual for cemetery trusts

The department has completed a project to merge the Class A and Class B cemetery trust manuals into a single manual. The new manual is called the *Manual for Victorian cemetery trusts*.

This project was undertaken to reduce duplication, improve consistency and enable streamlined updates of the department’s key resource for cemetery trusts.

Another aim of this project was to change the way cemetery trusts access and use the manual. Instead of cemetery trusts referring to hard copies of the manual that were printed out at a point in time, the manual is designed to be used as a living online document that is downloaded from our website as and when it is needed.

We are committed to keeping the manual as up-to-date and accurate as possible. With an online document, we can make timely changes to continue to update and expand the manual as guidance changes and new guidance is developed.

The new manual will be available by early December 2024 on the [Cemeteries and Crematoria website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/cemeteries-and-crematoria>.

A summary of the changes made in the new manual and guidance on how to download it and search for information is attached.

# Fire season 2024–25

Many of Victoria’s public cemeteries are located in and near bush, forest and woodland. Fire risk is most extreme in these areas.

Bushfires are unpredictable. They vary according to the local conditions, but the worst ones will start on hot, dry, windy days.

We encourage cemetery trusts to be prepared for fire and for all trust members to stay informed, especially during fire season.

We also recommend cemetery trusts in high fire risk locations consider postponing funerals on declared fire danger days in the interests of community safety.

## VicEmergency website and app

The VicEmergency website and app have up-to-date emergency information and warnings across the state. For information, visit the [VicEmergency website](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au) <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au>.

Download the VicEmergency app from the App Store or Google Play by following the links on the VicEmergency website.

# Abstracts of accounts

Thank you to all Class B cemetery trusts that have submitted their abstract of accounts for the 2023–24 financial year.

A copy of the 2023–24 abstract of accounts was sent to each trust in mid-June and was due to the department on 1 September 2024.

The department accepts late submissions and asks that all trusts to comply with this requirement.

Copies can also be downloaded from the [Class B cemetery trust financial reporting webpage](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-financial-reporting-and-procedures) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-financial-reporting-and-procedures>.

Please note that trusts that do not submit the abstract of accounts will not be eligible to apply for the department’s Cemetery Grants Program.

# Grants program

The first round of the 2024–25 Cemetery Grants Program closed on 31 October 2024. Cemetery trusts that applied for a grant will be notified of the outcome in December.

The next round (2024–25, round 2) closes on 31 March 2025.

The *Cemetery Grants Program guidelines*, *Cemetery grants application form* and *Vegetation removal, destruction or lopping* attachment are available on the [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>.

# Electronic banking and the removal of cheques

The Commonwealth Government has indicated that cheques will cease to be a payment method for governments in Australia by 2028.

All Victorian Government departments and agencies, such as cemetery trusts, will be required to work towards eliminating cheques as a payment method.

The Commonwealth Government has proposed the following timeframe for eliminating cheques across the Australian economy:

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| Year | Action |
| 2026 | Cease cheque issuance by governments and businesses |
| 2028 | Cease cheque acceptance by governments and businesses |
| 2030 | Australian cheque system formally closed |

Cemetery trusts that do not already use electronic banking should arrange to do so. Please contact your bank’s relationship or account manager to discuss.

More information is available on the [Commonwealth Treasury Minister’s website](https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/jim-chalmers-2022/media-releases/modernising-payments-infrastructure-phasing-out-cheques) <https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/jim-chalmers-2022/media-releases/modernising-payments-infrastructure-phasing-out-cheques>.

# Photo of a water cartage trailerFire safety at Kangaroo Ground Cemetery

Last year Kangaroo Ground Cemetery Trust successfully applied for a grant to purchase a water cartage trailer for firefighting.

The trust received a grant of $7,346.90 through the department’s Cemetery Grants Program.

Kangaroo Ground Cemetery is in an area with high bushfire risk, and there is no access to mains water. In the event of fire or ember attack, the trailer will allow the trust to prepare the cemetery in keeping with CFA recommendations. This includes filling gutters on buildings with water and flooding vulnerable areas.

As part of this project, the trust used its own funds to purchase a standpipe and fire hose required to connect the trailer to a public hydrant to fill the tank.

This project is a fantastic example of a trust proactively addressing fire safety to protect the cemetery and minimise risks to surrounding properties and communities.

# Did you know?

It is an offence to hunt in a public cemetery without prior approval.

Hunting and setting up snares, traps or poisons is not allowed in public cemeteries unless the cemetery trust has granted approval in writing.

# Default perpetual maintenance component added to the fee justification model

Cemetery trusts have a legal obligation to consider the need to fund the perpetual maintenance of the cemetery when setting fees. The financial health of all public cemeteries depends on the trust setting aside funds to maintain the cemetery in the future.

To encourage trusts to include a perpetual maintenance component in all fees, the fee justification model has been updated to include a default perpetual maintenance contribution of $2.

When completing the fee justification model, a trust can choose one of the following options:

1. **Increase the default figure**
The trust *must* submit its calculations for the new figure as part of its fee application.
2. **Leave the default figure in the model**
The trust does not need to submit the calculation of this figure.
3. **Decrease the default figure**
As any figure below $2 is considered a nominal amount, the trust does not need to submit calculations.
4. **Replace the default figure with $0**
In its cover letter to the fee application, the trust should provide its reasoning for not collecting a perpetual maintenance contribution from fees.

The fee justification model user guide has also been updated with more detailed advice on how to calculate a perpetual maintenance component for right of interment fees.

The fee justification model is available for download from the [Class B cemetery trust fee setting webpage](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-fee-setting) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/class-b-cemetery-trust-fee-setting>.

# Class B member vacancies now advertised online

Trust member vacancies on Class B cemetery trusts are now advertised on the Victorian Government’s ‘Join a Public Board’ website.

The website enables Victorians to search for public board vacancies by industry or community sector and by location.

The website also has information about what public boards do, what board members do and why board diversity matters.

For more information, visit the [Join a Public Board website](https://www.boards.vic.gov.au) <https://www.boards.vic.gov.au>.

# Trust email addresses

We prefer to contact trusts via a designated trust email address, rather than people’s individual email addresses (for example, xcemeterytrust@gmail.com).

If your trust does not already have a trust email address, we request that you create one and let us know the address so we can add it to our records.

A trust email account will:

* allow secretaries and nominated members shared access to receive and send emails
* enable emails to be actioned in a timely way 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 a trust email account.

Note: It is recommended that more than one trust member have access to the trust email account to ensure trust communications can continue to be managed by the trust if the primary contact is unavailable.

# Free online grave safety training

The Cemeteries and Crematoria Association of Victoria (CCAV), in conjunction with WorkSafe Victoria and Our Community, has developed a free online training program about safety around graves.

The program is available to all cemetery trust members, staff and contractors on the Institute of Community Directors Australia’s [online training portal](https://training.communitydirectors.com.au) <https://training.communitydirectors.com.au/>.

Follow these steps to access the program:

1. Follow this link to the [online training portal](https://training.communitydirectors.com.au) <https://training.communitydirectors.com.au/>.
2. Click ‘**SIGNUP**’ in the top-right corner of the screen to create your account. (Note: If you already have an account, you can log in without needing to register again.)
3. When you have registered/logged in, your training home page will open. Click ‘**JOIN GROUP**’ in the menu on the right-hand side of the screen.
4. In the pop-up window enter the following key: **ccav-compact-course**
5. Click ‘**Join group**’ and the course will be added to your training home page.

You can complete the course at your own pace. During the course, you can stop and start whenever it suits you.

The course is designed to take about 4 hours to complete, but it can take less time depending on your existing knowledge.

Don’t forget to print the certificate of attainment at the end of the course.

If you have any questions about the training program, please contact Norelle Cole, Executive Officer, CCAV on 0457 416 398 or email Norelle <executiveofficer@ccav.org.au>.

# Developing policies

Cemetery trusts develop and implement policies to help manage the cemeteries they are responsible for.

The department has developed templates to assist Class B cemetery trusts to develop and document trust policies. The templates can be adapted to suit the individual circumstances of each trust.

The following templates are available for download on the [Policy templates for Class B cemetery trusts webpage](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/policy-templates-class-b-cemetery-trusts) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/cemeteries-and-crematoria/policy-templates-class-b-cemetery-trusts>:

* Cash management policy template
* Complaints policy template
* Contractor policy template
* Gifts, benefits and hospitality policy template
* Memorialisation policy template
* Monumental mason policy template
* Purchasing and tendering policy template

Policies should be reviewed at least every 2 years to ensure they are current and effective.

Policy templates are also available via the Institute of Community Directors Australia’s (ICDA) [Policy Bank](https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/policy-bank) <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/tools-resources/policy-bank>. These templates are developed for not-for-profit organisations and cover a wide range of policy areas.

# Free governance training

Free face-to-face governance training workshops for Class A and Class B cemetery trusts are held across Victoria. The workshops are delivered by 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: <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 Our Community <learn@ourcommunity.com.au> to request an invitation.

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

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