

NATURAL BURIAL

Purpose

To provide natural burial opportunities that conserve and enhance local biological diversity, water resources and soil quality, and by doing so, maintain the ecological functions and integrity of the larger regional ecosystem.

Policy

1. To reduce the impact of conventional burial and cremations on the environment:
 - a) No embalming of the body will be permitted, and the deceased must be conveyed in an approved casket or coffin, constructed of a biodegradable and untreated material derived from a sustainable resource.
 - b) It is not intended that any artificial joints, limbs or other implants be removed prior to burial, although funeral directors shall remove any heart pacemakers, infusion pumps and any other battery-operated devices.
 - c) Burial sites will be planted with indigenous flora.
2. To maintain or enhance the quality of the natural environment:
 - a) Plots may be laid out in a similar way as a conventional cemetery but regeneration will be used in place of traditional memorial practices.
 - b) Additional flora may be grown around the plot to create a green or natural setting that will provide a haven for fauna in the future.
 - c) Natural burials shall only involve a single burial except where two burials are to occur simultaneously during the conduct of the same funeral, in which case a second burial will be permitted. This ensures that the newly created environment remains undisturbed.
 - d) Plot locations will be surveyed and mapped. A defined survey mark will be placed nearby to indicate grave locations.
3. To achieve rapid and real return of the body to the earth:
 - a) Natural burial is defined as burial that conforms to the ordinary course of nature.
 - b) The aim is to return the body to the soil as quickly as would naturally occur.
 - c) The absence of embalming may assist this.
 - d) The body is buried to a depth with an active layer of soil (1.4m) to maximise the rate of decomposition and the use of biodegradable coffins or caskets will further enhance this process.
4. To provide a more natural and sustainable alternative to conventional burial:
 - a) Natural burial aims to lower the environmental impact and carbon footprint of burial.
 - b) In the absence of embalming and through the use of coffins and caskets which are simpler and less ornate certain environmental components attributed to the conduct of conventional funerals may be reduced.

5. To ensure low ongoing sustainable maintenance requirements:
 - a) Less maintenance will be carried out in a natural burial cemetery due to the reduced need for landscaping, plot manicuring, and headstone upkeep and memorabilia management.
 - b) Natural cemeteries do not require regular mowing and only require minimal upkeep such as initial watering, tending of juvenile trees and weed control.
6. Cremated remains interred in the designated gravesite shall be contained in a biodegradable container that is non-retrievable. Alternatively, cremated remains may be placed directly into the earth.
7. No headstone or memorial, marker, stone, vase, tribute or any structure temporary or otherwise may be placed or erected at the gravesite.
8. Charges for natural earth burials are to be based on cost recovery.

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