Questions raised during Community Consultation Sessions

Shepparton

Wednesday 17th & Thursday 18th April 2019

Q. How will the finances be managed?

A. Remembrance Parks Central Victoria is a government owned enterprise established as one of five Class A cemetery trusts under the provisions of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003. It is accountable to the Minister for Health through the Department of Health and Human Services. It is not strictly a not-for-profit organisation as there is a need to reserve funds to meet perpetual maintenance commitments of all its sites.

Following Ministerial approval, the assets of Pine Lodge and Kialla West cemeteries will be transferred to RPCV as part of an acquisition (eg toilet blocks, concrete beams) along with the funds currently held by GSCC for ROI and pre-purchases, so that RPCV may continue to honour those commitments. All funds received will be accounted for separately and will be held and used for the management and maintenance of Pine Lodge and Kialla West cemeteries.

As we do with our current sites, we will continue to identify community and funding opportunities that RPCV can utilise to support the Shepparton community.

Q. How long do you hold the rights to a grave or pre-purchase?

A. In Victoria all burial sites remain in perpetuity under Government legislation. Pre-purchase and ROI sites are valid for 25 years, after which if not taken up, RPCV are entitled to approach the holder to discuss ongoing rights.

GSCC will provide RPCV with all information regarding ROI sites and any arrangements that you currently have in place with GSCC will be honoured by RPCV.

Pre-purchasing opportunities will re-commence with RPCV as soon as possible after 1 July 2019

Q. Do you have a process for memorialisation regarding the management and removal of items?

A. RPCV has a Decorations Policy in place for all its sites focussed on maintaining the safety of all staff and visitors to RPCV sites. This policy maintains respect for self and others and is focussed on maintaining the aesthetics of RPCV sites.

Where items are placed on graves that do not meet our policy we will communicate with the families concerned to come to an agreed outcome.
Q. How had you communicated about these community meetings?

A. GSCC first held consultation meetings in 2018 when discussions about the change in management were in progress. RPCV consulted closely with GSCC regarding scheduling our own community consultation meetings, including timing and venues of the meetings.

The two meetings RPCV held on 17 and 18 April 2019 were advertised on the GSCC website, the RPCV website and in the local newspaper, The Shepparton Adviser on 10 April 2019 along with a feature article on RPCV and interview with the CEO, Dean McElroy.

In addition, letters were mailed to all funeral directors, local Politicians, local religious leaders, health and aged care facilities, local heritage and historical organisations and local service clubs, past members of the cemetery trust and the Chair of the Shepparton General Cemetery.

Q. When was RPCV formed?

A. Remembrance Parks Central Victoria (Bendigo Cemeteries Trust) is a government-owned enterprise established in June 1988 as one of five Class A Cemetery Trusts under the provisions of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003 (the Act). The organisation is accountable to the Minister of Health through the Department of Health and Human Services, and is responsible for the direct management of six sites. The trust also has a broader responsibility to provide leadership, support and assistance to 100+ Class B cemetery trusts across Central Victoria. In addition to this, we also continue to manage the Axedale Catholic Cemetery on behalf of the Diocese of Sandhurst.

Q. Are you a for profit organisation?

A. RPCV has a need to reserve funds to meet the perpetual maintenance commitments of all its sites, and therefore cannot be seen as a strictly not-for-profit organisation. A small profit is aimed for each year, with the majority of these funds being re-invested back into site improvements (eg, lawns, pathways, tree planting etc).

Q. Is the Shepparton General Cemetery included in this transfer?

A. Pine Lodge and Kialla West cemeteries currently operated by GSCC are the only sites in consideration for transfer to RPCV management and operations.

Q. Will there be a name change for Pine Lodge & Kialla West?

A. There is no plan for any name change other than to recognise management and operation by RPCV on signage etc.

Q. What will be your area of responsibility for maintaining?

A. RPCV is a highly experienced service provider in after life care and can offer a level of specialist service provision in an area that can be difficult for any Council to offer. It is our intention to maintain both Pine Lodge and Kialla West cemeteries with the same compassion, empathy, dedication of purpose and pride as we do currently in Bendigo.
Our current operations manager and grounds maintenance contractor have developed a scope of works for the Shepparton sites that will ensure they receive the same high degree of maintenance as our Bendigo sites. This has included preliminary planning of any future improvements that may be required.

Q. Should RPCV consider additional Community Consult meetings?

A. RPCV is in the process of forming a Community Advisory Committee specifically for the Shepparton sites. This committee will provide an avenue for communication and advocacy to and from the local community directly with RPCV. Advertisements seeking applications for this Committee have already been placed in the local Shepparton newspaper on 17 April 2019, and details are also on our website. We welcome interest and involvement of the local community.

Q. Is there a consideration for building a Chapel or Crematorium at Pine Lodge?

A. This is a long-term strategic consideration and as we have not commenced operations of any kind it is premature for RPCV to consider such investment/infrastructure. If there is a community need/demand in the future then it may be considered.

Q. Who are the appointees of RPCV (Names, contact details etc)

A. Trust Board Members are appointed by the Governor in Council upon the recommendation of the Minister of Health.

Current Members are:
- Pam Macdonald (Chair) Email: chair@rpcv.com.au
- Ken Belfrage
- Damien Tangey
- Craig Lloyd
- Lauren Bean
- Mark Gibson
- Marg Lewis

Members other than the Chair may be contacted through the CEO’s office – Email dean.mcelroy@rpcv.com.au or by phoning on 1300 266 561, ext. 205

Q. Is this a paid Trust, Class A and Full time?

A. All Board Members of the five Class A trusts in Victoria are remunerated as per Government guidelines. All RPCV trust members are part time; however, we have a staff of 15 with a mix of casual, part time and full-time roles.

Q. What Assets are to be transferred?

A. Following Ministerial approval, the assets of Pine Lodge and Kialla West cemeteries will be transferred to RPCV as part of the acquisition (eg toilet blocks, concrete beams) along with the funds currently held by GSCC for ROI and pre-purchases, so that RPCV may continue to honour those commitments. There is no grounds maintenance equipment in the assets to be transferred to RPCV. A detailed list of assets forms part of the agreement.
Q. **What financial Transfers will take place at time of acquisition?**

A. Following Ministerial approval, the assets of Pine Lodge and Kialla West cemeteries will be transferred to RPCV as part of the acquisition (eg toilet blocks, concrete beams) along with the funds currently held by GSCC for ROI and pre-purchases, so that RPCV may continue to honour those commitments.

Q. **Who will maintain the responsibility for general grounds maintenance and grave digging?**

A. RPCV is a highly experienced service provider in after life care and can offer a level of specialist service provision in an area that can be difficult for any Council to offer. It is our intention to maintain both Pine Lodge and Kialla West cemeteries with the same compassion, empathy, dedication of purpose and pride as we do currently in Bendigo.

Our current grounds management contractor is Groundswell Australia and they will assume responsibility for the two Shepparton sites following the change in management. A current member of the Groundswell team is a local member of the Shepparton community and will relocate to oversee maintenance and gravedigging services for both cemeteries.

The following were general statements made during the meetings.

- Please consider additional ways to communicate meetings or changes rather than just relying on newspaper adverts. Does not reach all regional houses.  
  RPCV will investigate other ways of communication, and this will be an important first task for the Shepparton Community Advisory Committee (when formed) to work on.

- Recommendation was to consider or include a mail out to all holders of the ROI to provide further information. 
  RPCV will consider this.

- Concerns that Kialla West will become a Muslim Cemetery. The addition of the Muslim section at Kialla West happened without consult. 
  RPCV has no plan for this to eventuate, and will support the existing cemetery layout.

- General concern was expressed over the process for approaching and approval of transfer to RPCV. The process lacked transparency, with limited or no community communication or engagement.
  These concerns are for GSCC to respond to, as it pre-dates RPCV’s involvement.