

Little Yarra Area Bushland Natural Burials

Frequently asked questions



What is a natural burial?

A natural burial ground is a place where human burial “usually takes place in a biodegradable coffin or shroud, and a tree, shrub or wildflowers are planted as a memorial instead of having a headstone” (The Natural Death Centre, 2003).

There are a number of ways in which natural burial practices differ from conventional burials:

The deceased is placed in a shroud or a biodegradable coffin. Bodies are not embalmed and use of chemicals in coffins is avoided. Individual grave site marking is minimal and only fully biodegradable materials are used.

What are the benefits of a natural burial?

Natural burials provide a dignified alternative to conventional burials that enhance the environment and provide a lasting legacy for your loved one. Natural burials reduce the environmental impact of the disposal of human remain. They also assist in the re-establishment of locally indigenous flora and native ecosystems and provide protection for these ecosystems in perpetuity.

How many burials can take place in each burial plot?

In order to allow the natural revegetation of the burial plot and to preserve this into perpetuity, only one interment shall be permitted in each grave.

Do I need to use a coffin?

No. This cemetery follows the principles of internationally recognised ‘green-burial’ or ‘natural earth’ burial. You are not obliged to use a coffin, seen as wasteful to some. You may choose to be buried wrapped simply in a shroud of biodegradable cotton. This ensures your body is in close contact with the earth and that decomposition of the body is quick and natural.

If you choose to use a coffin it must be made from natural organic materials such as plantation timber or woven wicker or recycled cardboard.

Why are normal coffins not permitted in the BushLand Cemetery?

Normal coffins are made from chipboard (MDF) which is comprised of unknown timber and other synthetic organic compounds such as glues. These glues contain formaldehyde and other toxic volatile and environmentally persistent organic compounds. When the coffin breaks down these compounds are released into the immediate environment. Some travel away with the natural water flow or seep to the soil surface and are released as gas. Other environmentally persistent organic compounds bind to the surrounding soils and remain toxic for decades.

Can I place floral tributes on the grave?

Yes, natural floral tributes can be placed on the grave provided that they contain no binding or wrapping which is not fully biodegradable. Flowers containing support wires, cables or supports or hydration bases or vases will be removed. Artificial flowers are not permitted and may be removed by the Trust.

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How will the grave be marked for future reference?

The natural burial section of the cemetery allows no traditional or formal headstones. The only type of grave marker allowed is a timber marker post as prescribed by the Trust. You may also choose to have a small bronze plaque inscribed with the details of the deceased, installed on the central memorial site situated located at the entrance to the natural burial section, as prescribed by the trust.

We take very accurate survey details of the grave boundary and the direction the grave faces. This will be recorded on a cemetery map. A copy of this map showing the location of the grave can be provided on request.

Why bushland burial rather than conventional lawn cemetery or cremation?

Cremation is a convenient method for conducting a funeral, but it is costly in respect of natural resources and the impact upon the environment. Cremation discharges large amounts of CO₂ and other toxic substances such as dioxins and heavy metals like mercury. Studies conducted by consultants engaged by the Centennial Park Authority (SA) also confirmed that cremation contributes an average of 160kg CO₂ to the atmosphere for each cremation. This study also revealed that in the life span of a conventional cemetery, burial in such was an even greater contributor of CO₂ due to repetitive maintenance.

Can I plant a tree upon the grave of my loved one?

No. We understand the desire of people to see life blossom from death and the desire to have a living monument of their life, however this is not healthy for the cemetery ecosystem. If each grave had a monument tree then the open forest vegetation pattern would alter drastically and result in the suppression of natural undergrowth grasses and adjoining monument trees. It is a part of the vegetation management plan for this site to ensure that the mature Gum trees are not interfered with in any way. They form an integral part of the cemetery ecosystem, by supporting fauna such as possums and native birds.

What maintenance will be allowed?

The Trust will enhance the existing bushland setting by planting Indigenous vegetation near or on used graves from time to time, in accordance with the Trust's Vegetation Management Plan. No other planting will be permitted. The area will be maintained by the Trust in accordance with the Vegetation Management Plan. No other vegetation management will be permitted.

How do I arrange for interment in the natural burial section of the cemetery?

If you wish to purchase a burial plot in preparation for your own or a loved one's burial, just call our office on 03 59672572 during normal work hours or 0408 310 179 outside office hours.