

20 June 2016

John Weekes
Reporter
The Dominion Post
Level 7, Spark Central
42-52 Willis Street
Wellington 6011

Dear Mr Weekes

Request for information relating to unmarked and unknown graves in Wellington cemeteries.

Thank you for your email to the Council received on 24 May 2016 in which you requested information relating to unmarked and unknown graves in Wellington cemeteries. Your request was forwarded to the Issues Resolution Office to compile and provide a response.

I will address your questions in the order of your email.

1) “How many unmarked graves are in cemeteries and other burial facilities within your Council boundaries?”

There are numerous unmarked plots in the Karori and Makara Cemeteries'. However, the Council is unable to provide an accurate number. The reasons for unmarked plots are many and include the following:

- Older wooden markers now broken down
- Personal choice not to memorialise a plot
- Pre-purchased plots not used yet. Some of these in Karori Cemetery can date back many years
- Lack of funding by the family at the time of the interment
- Paupers
- Those estranged from family
- Family request for the deceased to be disinterred and the plot marker/headstone moved elsewhere
- Societal attitudes- with stillborn infants, suicides, asylum patients and criminals- all being possible reasons why a plot is left unmarked

2) “How many graves are marked ‘unknown’?”

Collectively, 147 graves are recorded as ‘unknown’ from the Bolton St Cemetery, Karori Cemetery and Makara Cemetery.

3) "Please provide the number of unmarked and unknown graves by cemetery/graveyard"

Please note: unmarked plots are different to unknown plots.

The figures below relate to graves where the identity of the deceased is unknown.

Bolton St Cemetery- 67

Karori Cemetery- 78 – (These can relate to multiple interments in same plots, eg: Tangiwai disaster memorial, stillborn infants, paupers, patients from 'asylums', etc.)

Makara- 2- (These relate to recent burials by NZ Police from remains of unknown victims from their Archives storage facility at the Porirua Police College.)

Yours sincerely



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