

# 1. Mō tēnei Mahere

## About this plan

### 1.1 Purpose and scope

Wellington City Council (the Council) manages four cemeteries: Tawa, Bolton Street, Karori and Mākara (see 1.3 for a brief overview).

Cemetery and cremation services are an essential part of the Council's functions and infrastructure. Under the Burial and Cremation Act, the Council has responsibilities and functions to provide for burials, manage cemeteries and keep cemetery records. Under the Local Government Act, councils are also required to periodically assess provision of cemetery and cremation services, including the current and future demand and the quality of services.

The Council provides and manages land and infrastructure for its cemeteries. It also provides customer services to the bereaved, funeral sector and the public by handling bookings, information enquiries and carrying out burials and cremations.

The cemeteries are important places of commemoration. They are also valued public open spaces with amenity, heritage, natural and recreation values. A cemeteries management plan is required to:

- ensure there is adequate future provision of cemetery land and infrastructure
- guide the management and ongoing maintenance of the city's cemeteries
- inform the Council's financial planning of resourcing requirements.

This Cemetery Management Plan has been prepared to provide a consistent policy, management and decision-making framework for the Council to manage the following:

- Tawa, Karori and Mākara Cemeteries
- cemetery records including those of Bolton Street Cemetery<sup>1</sup>; and
- any other cemeteries or burial grounds for which the Council becomes responsible.

This plan is intended to span the 10-year period from 2021 to 2031 but within the context of a longer-term 20 to 50-year timeframe.

The plan sets the general policy direction about how the cemeteries are run and the land managed but is not a detailed operational, staff or asset management plan.

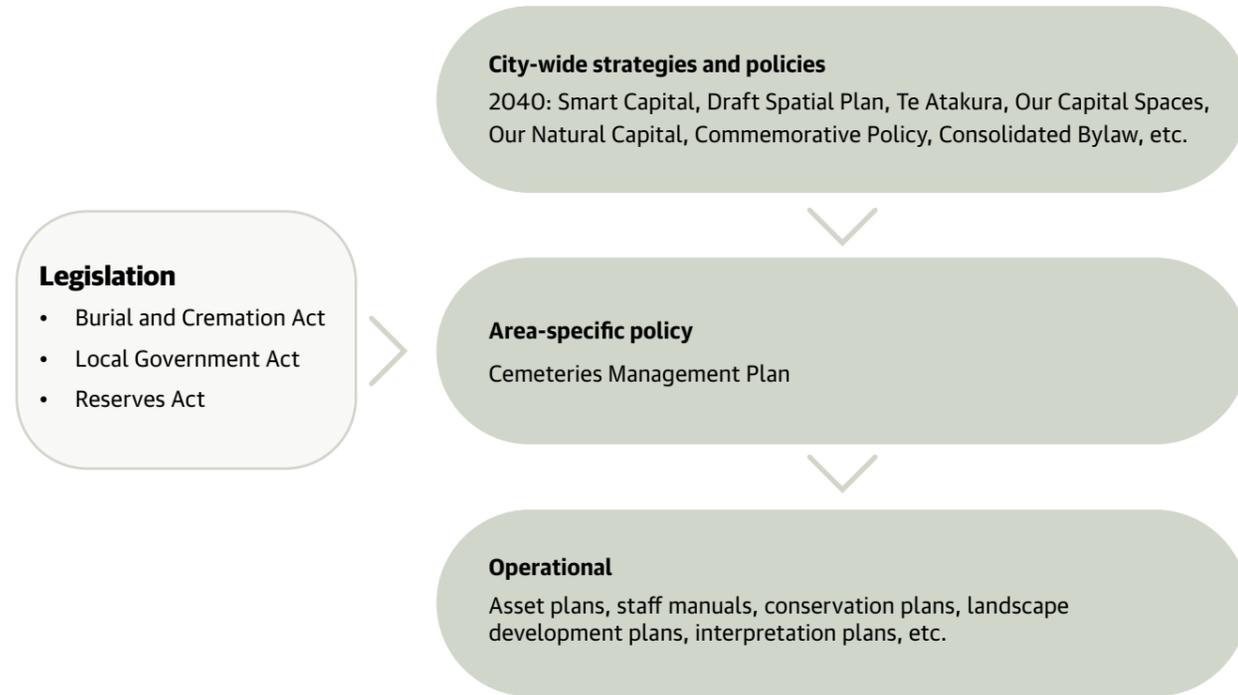
### 1.2 Legislative and strategic framework

This Cemeteries Management Plan fits within a broad framework of strategic, statutory and regulatory policies. The main documents are described in Appendix II, Strategic and Statutory Context.

As explained above, the Council has statutory requirements it must meet in providing and managing its cemeteries. Also important is the Council's own strategic framework which sets the broad direction on the way Wellington City will develop. Key strategies include *Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital and Planning for Growth* which focus on projected population growth. Within this context, the cemeteries are an essential part of the city's infrastructure and must be planned to ensure sufficient capacity for the growing population. The Council has also developed in recent years strategies that address climate change, resilience and the need for sustainability in the broadest sense, including *Te Atakura First to Zero*, *Wellington's Blueprint for a Zero Carbon Capital* and the *Wellington Resilience Strategy*. There are various ways in which the cemeteries management can contribute to these aspirational strategies.

<sup>1</sup> Bolton Street Cemetery, is otherwise managed under the Botanic Gardens of Wellington Management Plan

The relationships between this plan and the other documents are shown in the diagram below



### 1.2.1 Reserves Act

This management plan has not been prepared under the Reserves Act because the land within Karori and Mākara cemeteries is not classified as reserve under the Act except for two land parcels at Karori Cemetery, comprising about 1.5 hectares. These are local purpose reserves and a management plan is not required for local purpose reserves.

Tawa Cemetery is an historic reserve, which means a management plan under the Act is required for it. It is already covered under the *Council's Suburban Reserves Management Plan (SRMP)* but the only specific policy about the cemetery in that plan is to classify it as an historic reserve. This has now been done. Tawa Cemetery is included in the scope of this plan to ensure that its special values are provided

for in more detail and that there will be a consistent approach to managing the Council's cemeteries. However, if there is a conflict between the policies in this plan and the SRMP in respect of Tawa Cemetery, the latter will have precedence.

Note: Bolton Street Cemetery is also an historic reserve under the Reserves Act. Detailed policies for its management are already contained in the *Botanic Gardens of Wellington Management Plan (BGWMP)*. If there is a conflict between the policies in this plan and the BGWMP, the latter will have precedence.

### 1.2.2 Relationship with mana whenua

Wellington City Council recognises the importance of the mana whenua<sup>2</sup> relationship and has formal memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika (Taranaki Whānui) and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira Incorporated (Toa Rangatira), based on the following principles:

- **Partnership**  
Acting reasonably, honourably and in good faith to ensure the strategic relationship has integrity and respect, in the present and for the future of Wellington
- **Participation**  
Recognising that both parties can contribute, for mutual benefit, in deciding the future of the city - working towards and achieving the parties' visions; and
- **Protection**  
Actively protecting the taonga of Taranaki Whānui and the taonga of Ngāti Toa Rangatira and safeguarding cultural concepts, values and practices to be celebrated and enjoyed for all Wellingtonians.

The Council has a responsibility to take into account the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi and to improve opportunities for Māori to contribute to local government decision-making processes.

Under the memoranda of understanding, each party recognises the authority of the other to exercise their responsibilities - kāwanatanga (governance) by the Council and rangatiratanga (customary authority) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) by tangata whenua.

This plan is intended to reflect these above principles including, in particular, the key relationship understandings recognised in the MOUs in relation to council planning and policy processes and to culture and heritage. Officers will continue to work with iwi to incorporate the Māori world view and concepts into the management and project work as appropriate. The Council is currently working on implementing the 2018 Te Tauihu - te reo Māori Policy which will help inform naming and interpretation processes and partnerships with iwi and the wider community.

<sup>2</sup> Mana whenua means customary authority exercised by an iwi or hapu in an identified area.

#### 1.2.2.1 Opau Urupā

The land for Opau Urupā was set aside for Taranaki Whānui ki Te Ūpoko o Te Ika in its Treaty settlement in 2009. Close to the wild, west coast of Mākara, the site holds particular significance to Taranaki Whānui due to its connections with past settlement and the abundant seafood resources of the coast. The urupā is vested in the Trustees of Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST) as a Māori Reservation and there is a protective covenant over the land. The urupā occupies a site of some 3.9 ha of steep hill country along Mākara Road. The urupā was opened in September 2017 and currently has two interments. The site has 25 carparks and is accessed from Mākara Road up a hill along some 400 metres of chip-sealed road. The urupā has a capacity of between 700 and 1050 standard burials along with ash burial spaces. The MOU between the Council and PNBST states that the Trust and the Council will work together to establish the mana whenua urupā provided for through the Settlement Act.

# Wellington City Cemeteries

## Council-owned Cemeteries

- Closed Cemeteries
- Operational Cemeteries

## Taranaki Whānui Urupā

- The Opau Urupā is owned and managed by Taranaki Whānui with support from Wellington City Council



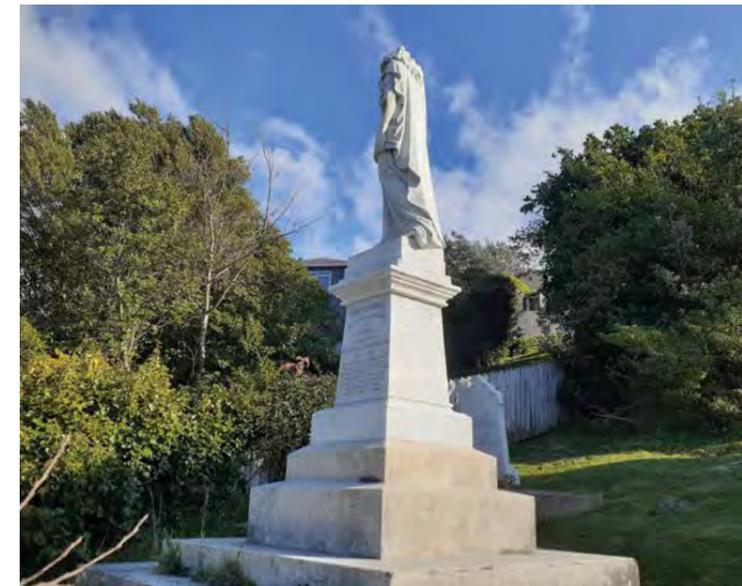
## 1.3 The Council's cemeteries

The Council manages four cemeteries - Tawa Cemetery, Karori Cemetery, Mākara Cemetery and Bolton Street Cemetery. The Bolton Street Cemetery was closed in 1892. It is an historic reserve and is managed as a botanic garden under the *Botanic Gardens of Wellington Management Plan*.

A chronology of the main developments in the three cemeteries and a brief history of each is contained in Appendix III.

### 1.3.1 Tawa Cemetery

A small closed cemetery, which is classified as an historic reserve (see 1.2.1).



Date of first burial	1867
Date land acquired	1861
Date closed	1978
Km from Wellington centre	19
Area in hectares	0.1
Approx. number of interments (all burials)	50

Originally the churchyard of St Peter's Anglican Church on Main Road, Tawa. The church was later moved to another site.

Today, the cemetery retains something of its original country churchyard character. It is an archaeological site, with significant heritage.

The Wellington City Council manages four cemeteries and works in partnership to support Taranaki Whānui in managing the Opau Urupā.

### 1.3.2 Karori Cemetery

This cemetery is nearly full. The cemetery office is located here as well as the crematorium and two chapels.



Date of first burial	1891
Date land acquired	1890
Area in hectares	35.5
Total interments, June 2021 (burials and ashes)	86,600

A limited number of ash plots remain. Otherwise, interments (burial or ash) into existing family plots only.

An archaeological site, significant for its heritage. Has a mature landscape, including large trees. Increasing walking and other recreational use. Genealogical research has risen in recent years.

### 1.3.3 Mākara Cemetery

The main operational cemetery, where most burials and ash interments take place, including natural burials. Remaining capacity about 45 percent.



Date of first burial	1951
Date land acquired	1955
Km from Wellington centre	10
Area in hectares	84
Area currently in cemetery use (hectares)	10
Total interments, June 2021 (burials and ashes)	12,950

A lawn cemetery - graves maintained in mown grass and marked by headstones or plaques. Used by locals for walking.

### 1.3.4 Issues and opportunities

This management plan has been prepared at a critical point in planning for the future provision and management of the Council's cemeteries. Key issues and opportunities addressed in this plan include the following:

#### Cemetery capacity and land development

Karori Cemetery has effectively reached its capacity. Mākara Cemetery will be reaching overall capacity for various types of interment from 2038 and some denominational areas will reach capacity sooner. Therefore, the Council needs to urgently acquire land for expansion and begin to develop the land to ensure it is ready for use when required.

#### Functional and efficient use of land

Most interments are in perpetuity, which means the Council has an ongoing and ever-increasing liability, as it must continue to maintain and provide public access to existing graves and keep providing more land. Options for using space more efficiently need to be considered, including offering graves for re-use after a period, while continuing to offer burial options that cater for people's diverse beliefs and customs around death and burial.

#### Karori Cemetery status

Once this cemetery is full, its future management needs to be planned. Certain cemetery-related operations will continue, including cremations and chapel hire. However, there is growing interest in its significant cultural and heritage values and there is an opportunity to manage it as an historic reserve and classify it accordingly under the Reserves Act.

#### Heritage protection

Karori and Tawa cemeteries are archaeological sites and are significant for their heritage values. Those values need to be recognised, managed and protected.

#### Natural environment

The developed parts of the cemeteries are interwoven with more natural areas, including streams at Karori and Mākara. These areas need to be managed for their biodiversity values and ecosystem services, alongside their amenity value.

#### Gravesite management responsibilities

There is public concern about the deteriorated condition of many graves in the two older cemeteries and the Council's level of investment in these cemeteries. However, it is often not realised by families that they are responsible for gravesite maintenance. As time passes, families tend to maintain graves less frequently, while at the same time the graves gain in heritage value. There are expectations that the Council will protect that heritage even though it is, strictly speaking, the responsibility of families and would come at an added cost to the Council (and therefore the wider community).

#### Gravesite decoration

Placing tributes and decorations on graves is important to grieving families but they tend to blow away after a time, creating rubbish and causing plastic pollution. Tributes, including garden planting, placed on shared lawn space in beam cemeteries can obstruct access.

#### Deferred maintenance of older cemeteries

The condition of graves and some other heritage features at the Tawa and Karori cemeteries have deteriorated, particularly due to damage from vegetation growth. Heritage conservation and vegetation management planning is required for both cemeteries followed by significant additional resourcing for implementation. Compliance with the archaeological requirements of the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014* will also need to be managed for these two cemeteries.

#### Recreation use and role of cemeteries within the wider open space network

The cemeteries are valued as places of quiet and tranquility, with historic interest, and are becoming more popular for recreational activities such as walking and running. There is potential

for them to be destinations within the Council's open space networks but recreational use must be appropriate to the primary cemetery function, in particular an atmosphere of respect for the dead and support for grieving families.

#### Cemetery records and genealogy

Some historic cemetery records are at risk and are not easily accessed by the public because they are in paper-only form. Increasing interest in genealogy is generating increasing numbers of time-consuming enquiries because of the limited online access.

A current project to digitise all records, link records to GIS data and make fully available through a new online Cemetery Management System will make the records more secure and enable direct online access.

#### Volunteer / community involvement

There is increasing community interest in the heritage at the cemeteries and in helping with their protection and recognition. More community involvement could aid cemetery management but volunteer effort needs to be carefully managed as many heritage features are fragile and subject to the family ownership issue mentioned above.

#### Financial investment

New investment in the cemeteries will be required over the next decade to provide for land acquisition and development, catch up on delayed vegetation maintenance and better manage the heritage values, built fabric and archaeological requirements.

## 1.4 Cemetery trends

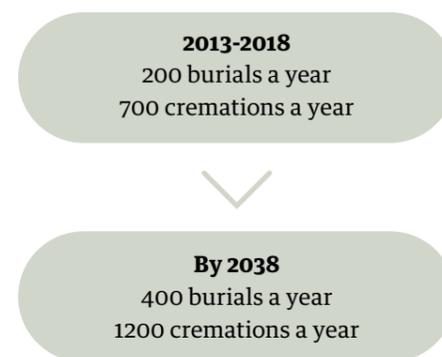
There are a number of trends that are typically influencing cemetery management nationally and worldwide, which provide a context for managing Wellington's cemeteries.

#### Capacity, land use and resourcing

Population growth sees growing demand for cemetery space, requiring capital expenditure on acquiring and developing more land. Traditionally, in many places, graves are held in perpetuity which means that the demand for additional cemetery space is continual

in the long-term, as cemeteries fill up. People prefer to have cemeteries within easy reach but it can be difficult to find suitable land that is affordable closer to communities. In some countries where there is limited land, new approaches are being adopted to increase capacity within existing areas, such as re-using graves. Funding cemeteries is an issue worldwide because there is a once-off charge for graves that must be maintained for decades at least, or in perpetuity.

*Annual burials and cremations in Wellington City are projected to increase*



#### New burial methods

Worldwide research and interest is increasing in interment methods that are seen as being more environmentally friendly and sometimes cost-saving. Locally, demand for natural burials is increasing - for example, of all Wellington burials the proportion of natural burials increased from 7 percent in 2008 to 12 percent in 2017. Alternative methods that are emerging include cremation by rapid composting or water resomation and use of biodegradable urns for ashes. Where land availability is an extreme issue, space-saving options are being developed, including scattering ashes at GPS-recorded locations at sea and developing vertical cemeteries in multi-story buildings that reduce the spatial footprint.

#### More self-help

More families are seeking to make their own burial and cremation arrangements directly with cemeteries and run their own funerals. This may be motivated by religious and cultural practices, changing preferences or by a need to save on cost.<sup>3</sup>

#### Recreational use of cemeteries

Changing attitudes in many countries are seeing cemeteries being used for recreational activities instead of being places that people avoid. Most commonly, people visit cemeteries to walk and enjoy the peaceful environs. Increasing interest in genealogy and the history in the cemeteries is another drawcard. In some places the history has been 'harnessed' for people to have an interactive experience of exploring a cemetery. Examples include guided tours, digital mapping apps, 360-degree virtual tours and even concerts and movie nights. Some of these activities are being used as a way of generating revenue, as well as hiring out cemetery facilities for non-cemetery activities.

#### Community involvement

'Friends of cemeteries' groups are increasing in New Zealand and worldwide, often motivated by interest in and a desire to protect the heritage that cemeteries contain, but also by the increasing value communities are placing on cemeteries as pleasant places to visit. These groups have a significant role in helping with cemetery management, thereby stretching resources further through voluntary activities.

## 1.5 Governance and expertise

The cemeteries are managed under the Parks, Sport and Recreation Business Unit of the Council's Customer and Community Group. The cemeteries manager runs a team that carries out the day-to-day operation of Karori and Mākara cemeteries. Tawa Cemetery is currently maintained under the city-wide parks and reserves maintenance programme.

Staffing is an operational matter, not governed by the policies in this management plan. However, it is noted here that a range of skills and attributes will be required to implement the policies in this plan. Historically, there was a larger cemetery team in which each person had a specific, single-focus role (such as crematorium operation, gardening, general

maintenance, chapel operation, records management). Those roles were later amalgamated into a multi-focused cemetery technician role. The cemeteries team needs to cover skills in administration, practical building and landscape maintenance, and people skills, particularly the empathy and respect required when assisting at burials and cremations. The variety of work in the technician role is advantageous because (i) staff are better able to fill in for each other during absences and (ii) the work is varied and interesting, which encourages staff to stay in their jobs.

In implementing some of the policies in this plan, it will be necessary to ensure that the following additional expertise is available from time-to-time or on a regular basis:

- Heritage advice, including archaeological and heritage conservation
- Vegetation management
- Horticulture
- Wayfinding and interpretation.

## 1.6 Plan structure

This plan is structured from the general to the area-specific as follows:

- **Part 2:** Vision and goals for all the cemeteries covered by this plan
- **Part 3:** General objectives and policies, applicable to all the cemeteries covered by this plan
- **Part 4:** Cemetery-specific policies and actions
- **Part 5:** Rules
- **Part 6:** Implementation according to priorities and funding.

<sup>3</sup> New Zealand Law Commission (2015). R134 *Death, Burial and Cremation: A new law for contemporary New Zealand*