

Submission  
No 9

## INQUIRY INTO FUNERAL INDUSTRY

**Organisation:** Dubbo City Council  
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**Theme:**

**Summary**

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4 May 2005

The Director  
Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Sir/Madam

### **INQUIRY INTO THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY – SUBMISSIONS DUE 27 MAY**

I refer to the abovementioned matter undertaken by the NSW Standing Committee on Social Issues and provide the following information.

Dubbo City Council is responsible for all public cemeteries within its LGA. The Cemeteries Function is administered by the Community Services Division and involves all facets of the Cemeteries including maintenance, interments, record keeping, family history enquiries, liaison with funeral directors, contract management, asset improvement and adherence of health standards and other legislative requirements. This service, whilst cost competitive with private enterprise still serves a public health, historical and social purpose.

Cemeteries controlled by Council include the New Dubbo Cemetery (approx. 70 burials pa), Old Dubbo Cemetery (approx. 5 burials pa), Wongarbron Cemetery, Pioneer Cemetery, Rawsonville Cemetery, Ballimore Cemetery and Tubbagah Aboriginal Burial Ground.

The Cemeteries Function operates at an annual deficit of approximately \$90,000. Fees and charges are similar to fees charged for private cemeteries in rural regional centres, however the income generated from operative cemeteries, in particular the New Dubbo Cemetery, heavily subsidise non operational cemeteries. This loss occurs as a result of the high maintenance, operating and capital costs and non income producing older cemeteries including rural cemeteries once administered by religious organisations, subsequently inherited by Council. The strategic layout and lack of records pertaining to the Old Dubbo Cemetery and rural cemeteries have also contributed to increasing costs.

Council provides free services (land and burial charges) for *stillborn babies* and approximately half the cost of land and burial charges for infants buried in the New Dubbo Cemetery.

Whilst the cemeteries are reasonably attractive, more could be done to landscape them and provide conservation, operational and capital upgrades/maintenance. This objective is difficult given limited revenue generated from the cemeteries and limitations from other sources of funding.

All fees for Council's cemeteries are proposed to be increased by approximately 10% in 2005/2006 as a result of increased grounds maintenance, capital projects and interment costs. The Cemeteries Function Plan identifies \$138,000 plus worth of improvements required at the Cemeteries over the next 10 years. Examples of capital costs encountered recently include; new foundation beams for headstones erected at a cost of \$11,385, irrigation extensions at a cost of \$14,000, internal roadways at a cost of \$24,000, signage at a cost of \$4,000, tree planing/watering system \$4,500, fence around Cemetery at a cost of \$80,000 to name a few.

The Cemeteries Function has in the past and will continue in the future to involve the community in projects such as tree planting days and working bees. This initiative assists Council with maintaining and upgrading its cemeteries by using voluntary labour, raising the profile of cemeteries within the community.

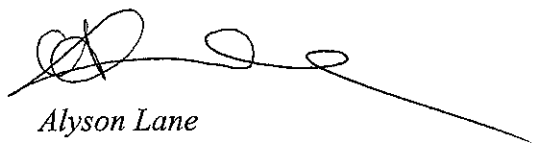
Whilst Council has seen an increase in the number of ashes interred within graves and in allocated ashes section over the past five years, this increase has not dramatically affected the burial rates within Council's cemeteries.

Below is a table indicating various costs to Council including costs per interment, per hectare, capital/asset maintenance costs, annual deficit and the number of interments per year.

Year	Cost to Council per interment	Cost per hectare to maintain New Dubbo and Old Dubbo Cemetery	Interments per annum	Capital/Asset Maintenance Costs	Annual Deficit
				\$50	\$55,243
2000/2001	\$496.73	\$3,030	61	\$10,883	\$91,342
2001/2002	\$518.67	\$4,040	82	\$18,537	\$57,677
2002/2003	\$483.45	\$3,331	60	\$11,386	\$64,359
2003/2004	\$613.63	\$3,634	67	\$86,894	\$155,423
2004/2005 as at March 2005	\$663	\$3,945	65	\$26,487	\$89,775
Estimate for 2005/2006	\$680	\$4,164	70	\$14,000	\$96,310
Estimate for 2006/2007				\$20,000	\$118,025
Estimate for 2007/2008				\$5,600	\$120,131
Estimate for 2008/2009				\$5,600	\$116,508

I hope the above information assists you with your inquiry. Should you wish to discuss any issue raised above, please do not hesitate to contact me on telephone (02) 68014401.

Yours faithfully



Alyson Lane  
Manager Business Support  
(Community Services)