

INQUIRY INTO CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA AMENDMENT REGULATION 2018

Organisation: Australian and New Zealand Diocese of Russian Orthodox
Church Outside of Russia

Date Received: 6 September 2018

6th September 2018

The Director,
Regulation Committee,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has come to my attention that a review is being conducted by the Regulation Committee of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly regarding the possible implementation of renewable tenure in cemeteries.

As the Vicar Bishop of the Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia and a prominent representative of the Russian community, I must express my strong disappointment with the level of consultation and communication from Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW and the Government in relation to this potential disruption of our cultural and religious practices within Rookwood Cemetery. As you would appreciate, it is disappointing to simply hear rumours and commentary about this issue through the 'grapevine' and in the media.

The Orthodox Christian faith and Russian culture places a great degree of importance on the ongoing preservation of the remains of our deceased loved ones. Russian Orthodoxy does not permit cremation and as such, burial is the only option available to us.

The Russian community understands the scarcity of land within Rookwood Cemetery through consultation with George Simpson, the CEO of Rookwood General Cemetery, and we continue to work with the Cemetery to secure pockets of land for our future requirements.

Given the apparent lack of consultation in relation to this issue, I am concerned that the Government and CCNSW do not appreciate the highly detrimental impact that implementing renewable tenure and interment rights at Rookwood Cemetery would have on the Russian community. I am particularly concerned about those members of the community who may be unable to afford to pay a premium for perpetual interment, if that is to be an effect of the proposed changes.



Accordingly, I request that you address the following questions:

- (1) What is the rationale for seeking to introduce renewable interments at Rookwood Cemetery?
- (2) Is the proposal a means to sustaining land and/or raising revenue?
- (3) If a purpose of the proposal is to sustain land, could the Regulator and the Minister provide an explanation as to why attempts by Rookwood General Cemetery to secure land at Fernhill were denied?
- (4) Have any Russian community leaders been consulted in relation to this issue and if so, what was their response to your consultation?

Burying loved ones is not something that should be taken lightly given that it impacts directly on vulnerable, grieving families. At this stage, we are struggling to see any empathy or sensitivity from the Government in relation to this issue and we seek assurance that it will not seek to achieve its political objectives at the expense of the religious and cultural needs of the Russian community.

I look forward to your response.

Bishop George of Canberra
Auxiliary Bishop of Australia and New Zealand Diocese
Of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

