



Fact Sheet #2

Proposed Southern Cemetery Frequently Asked Questions – Natural Burials

What is a natural burial?

The Australasian Cemeteries and Crematoria Association define a natural burial as the act of returning the body as naturally as possible to the earth. The body is not embalmed or cremated but instead buried in a simple casket or shroud in a protected green space. Only biodegradable and non-toxic materials may be buried with the body as part of a natural burial.

How are natural burials different from standard burials?

By choosing a natural burial, people are choosing a burial method which has a lower environmental impact. A natural burial reduces the energy and resource consumption associated with traditional practices in the longer term.

Are there markers to identify where the body was buried?

Natural burial grounds only contain natural markers that blend with the landscape. These markers can include shrubs and trees, or rocks or stones which may be engraved.

How can people find their deceased family member?

As in all cemeteries, careful records are kept of every interment and sites are mapped with a Geographic Information System (GIS).

Are there any natural burial grounds in Australia?

Natural burials grounds are located in Lismore (NSW), Kingston (Tasmania), Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park (Western Australia) and the Lilydale Cemeteries Trust (Victoria). Queanbeyan Cemetery also has a 'bush' section. The South Australian Government announced in October 2008 that their first natural burial ground will be opened at Enfield Memorial Park. In a number of jurisdictions natural cemeteries are being used to establish or restore forests or woodlands with native plant species.

Internationally, natural burial grounds are the fastest growing environmental movement in the United Kingdom. The first woodland burial ground was opened in 1993 and there are now approximately 200 in the UK. ACT legislation will need to be reviewed should demand for natural burial in the ACT grow. At present natural burial is only open to members of the Muslim community because of an established practice of allowing burial in a shroud.

Would a new southern cemetery allow for natural burial?

Natural burial is being considered as an option for the proposed southern cemetery. Feedback from consultation with the community and a further feasibility study will inform the decision on whether to proceed with natural burial as a part of the southern cemetery.

Community Engagement