



PLANNING PROPOSAL FOR MEMORIAL PARK/CEMETERY

QUESTIONS ARISING DURING ONLINE COMMUNITY MEETING

HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2020 – VIA ZOOM

The following questions were asked and answered, or taken on notice, during the memorial park/cemetery online community meeting. The questions have not been attributed to any particular attendees of the meeting but have been categorised based on topics or when the questions were asked. Some additional questions were submitted after the meeting and these have been attributed to individuals.

Questions related to understanding the traffic and transport impact

- 1. Was traffic modelling undertaken to understand the impact of funeral processions to traffic?**

Response

A Transport Impact Assessment was prepared to assess the impacts of the proposal on the adjacent road network.

- 2. Will further traffic modelling be done to better assess and understand the travel time impacts when a Burra resident is at the tail end of a funeral procession?**

Response

The Transport Impact Assessment considers that the overlap between funeral processions and peak traffic generation is very low. Traffic flow will also have been improved since the upgrade of Old Cooma Road.

- 3. Why has the WSP traffic report dismissed Queanbeyan and Googong Township community pedestrian and bike access?**

Response

The transport consultants consider that walking and cycling provisions to/from the proposed Memorial Park would not be well used by staff or visitors due to the high-speed road network and long distances to surrounding urban areas. Googong residents would have less distance to travel but no bike paths exist at present. When completed, the Googong-Queanbeyan shared path network will be less than 2km from the proposed site. The feasibility of extending out to the site would need to be considered at that time.

- 4. There is no public transport, nor will there be taxi (est. \$80 from QBN) or private vehicle only. Is it fair to make elderly or low income/ pensioners pay this much to visit loved ones?**

Response

The location was selected with the rapidly growing community in mind. In coming years, the Googong development will be only a short distance from the site. There is no public

transport at present and investment in a service is a commercial decision and dependant on demand. Unfortunately, a site for a cemetery of this size is often on the periphery of towns, resulting private car being the main means of transport. When Lanyon Dr Cemetery was developed, it too was on the outskirts of town and did not have transport options. The Lanyon Dr Cemetery does not have a bus service, even though they pass by, with most regular visitors using private vehicles.

5. Has Council got a preference for the location of the entrance and exit?

Response

Council would prefer that the main access drive be separated and off Burra Road as recommended by the transport consultant.

Questions related to the business case

6. Is the business case publicly available?

Response

The Business Management Plan (BMP) is yet to be finalised and cannot be finalised until a site is confirmed and any development conditions applied. Furthermore, the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) is currently conducting a review of cemetery operations and charges in NSW and the NSW Government is reviewing the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act*, both of which may impact any final BMP. Council will release the document at the appropriate time prior to the cemetery being operational.

7. Does it have a return on investment?

Response

While a final plan cannot be completed until the final is confirmed and development conditions are applied, the project is expected to be self-funded. It is appropriate that any cemetery business, whether operated by Council or a private company, is based on a fee for service, cost recovery basis at a minimum. Additionally, it is recognised across the sector that a perpetuity fund should be established to ensure long-term maintenance is funded from the plot sales. Early reviews indicate adequate return to cover all establishment and purchase costs, plus operations and a perpetuity fund.

8. What is the return on investment?

Response

See Above

9. Does the business case consider ownership models other than Council run?

Response

This will be considered in the Business Management Plan.

10. Does the Council intend to run the space, or would it be outsourced?

Response

Council has not considered whether it will operate or outsource the site. This will be a decision for a future Council.

- 11. Have there been private sector representations about the operation of the cemetery, and who has made those representations?**

Response

Council periodically gets representations from the cemetery sector. No specific representations have been received in recent years, nor has Council called for expressions of interest.

Questions related to Portion 75 (35 hectares) – next to the current cemetery

- 12. What has prevented the space being used for purposes other than a bush cemetery?**

Response

The Bushland Cemetery already has interments within the area and numerous ash placements Under NSW law "Right of Burial", owners legally hold these sites in perpetuity. The site was originally declared a Bushland Cemetery because of protected vegetation communities and habitats present onsite.

Questions related to planting of non-native plants

- 13. Why has Council prohibited the planting of non-native plants, grass or trees on our lot at Mount Pleasant when non-natives will likely be planted for the cemetery?**

Response

Lots identified within a Vegetation Management Area prohibits the planting of non-native plants, grass or trees. This forms part of the development application for Mount Pleasant. The cemetery is not yet at the development application stage. The Office of Environment and Heritage may require a Vegetation Management Plan as part of the DA depending on the quality of the remnant box gum woodland for example.

- 14. We are aware of someone at Mount Pleasant who was removed all grass from their lot and have receive a letter from the council about the "illicit" activity with drone footage of the "before & after" and they are subject to penalties. We'd like to hear comments regarding that event.**

Response

The Vegetation Management Plan forms part of the Development Application and in certain Vegetation Management Areas there are restrictions on clearing native vegetation outside of building envelopes. This is a compliance issue and can be discussed with Council's Compliance Officer.

- 15. Can we use this meeting as proof in case the Council initiates legal action should we not follow the vegetation recommendation?**

Response

The purpose of the community meeting is focused on the Planning Proposal for the proposed Memorial Park. Without specific details of the property in question, residents should seek advice from QPRC town planners.

Questions related to hydrological studies

- 16. Will future hydrological studies and modelling consider current and future state residential density and landscape changes, and allow for climate change?**

Response

Hydrological studies have been concluded. Future management of the site, should the Planning Proposal be approved, will consider external factors and will utilise water table loggers as part of the ongoing site management.

- 17. In regard to geotechnical /hydrogeological studies, what provision will be made for waste (sewage) disposal on the site?**

Response

Council will commission an Integrated Water Management Plan for the site which will include onsite wastewater treatment and disposal to would meet NSW Health requirements.

Questions related to a crematorium

- 18. Why hasn't a crematorium been proposed as part of the proposal?**

Response

Following community representations to councillors about concerns that a crematorium may be included in the development, Council resolved that no crematorium be included in the Planning Proposal.

- 19. Please provide more information on the status of a crematorium/ crematoria concept if the cemetery is approved.**

Response

Following community representations to councillors about concerns that a crematorium may be included in the development, Council resolved that no crematorium be included in the Planning Proposal. To change this decision, another Planning Proposal and approval from the NSW Government would be required. The current Council resolved not to include a crematorium or cremator in the planning proposal, therefore one will not be constructed.

Questions related to alternate sites

- 20. Please provide more information about the other proposed site in Googong**

Response

One site fronting Old Cooma Road was offered for sale by a local real estate agent, however the extent of hard rock on the site made it unviable. Another site, subject to commercial in confidence, was explored however was not available for a reasonable offer.

Questions related to the Southern Region Planning Panel

- 21. Please provide more information on the composition of the Southern Regional Planning Panel.**

Response

The panel is made up of three State representatives, two local representatives – a Councillor and an independent technical expert. Further information is available at <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/planning-panels/planning-panel-boundaries-and-members/southern-regional-planning-panel>

- 22. How are the members of the Southern Regional Planning Panel selected?**

Response

Selection is made by the NSW Government and Council.

Questions related to minimum criteria established by the Council for proposed memorial park

- 23. Were the criteria ever changed?**

Response

Very early reports considered the need for gas and possible larger buffers should a cremator be considered and preference for offset lands, however these are not required.

- 24. How well does the current location meet the initial criteria, rather than any changed criteria?**

Response

The site suits all initial criteria for 50-80 years of interments.

- 25. Have the criteria been adjusted to meet the current site?**

Response

No.

- 26. Does the useable space meet the original 10-hectare requirement?**

Response

Studies indicate 11.2 Ha are immediately suitable for interments and further land available with mitigation.

- 27. Was the requirement for a crematorium in the original criteria?**

Response

The original Planning Proposal did not specifically request a cremator, nor did it rule one out, however Council resolved to exclude a cremator from site.

Questions related to alternate uses of the current site

- 28. If the NSW Government disapproves of this site for the cemetery, what is Council's alternate use?**

Response

Council has not considered alternate uses yet. Should the Planning proposal be refused, Council will explore alternate uses at that time.

- 29. What contingency planning has been completed in the event of this application failing?**

Response

All efforts are being taken to prolong the serviceable life of Lanyon Drive Cemetery until a new cemetery is confirmed and commissioned.

Question related to secrecy of purchase

- 30. What was the logic the then administrator used in keeping the proposal and purchase secret from the local community?**

Response

At its meeting on 26 August 2015, the former Queanbeyan City Council resolved that:

Council authorise the General Manager to approach relevant property owners to secure options over land identified for potential cemetery purposes, to allow formal planning to proceed.

At QPRC's meeting, February 2017, Council resolved:

enter into a contract to purchase land at 1187 – 1241 Old Cooma Road, Royalla (Googong)

The Administrator, fulfilling the role of Council following the merger in 2016 and before the September 2017 election, acted in the interests of Council and the community by agreeing with staff recommendations that the report was "Commercial in Confidence" in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993*. All Council resolutions are contained in the minutes which are placed on Council's website at

<https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Council/Council-Business/Minutes-Agendas>

Questions related to visual amenity

- 31. Will the proposed cemetery along Burra Road be visually blocked with trees, wall etc so when people drive along Burra Road to access Mount Pleasant they won't see a cemetery?**

Response

A well-designed Memorial Park includes extensive landscaping and tree planting. Interments will be in discrete areas with landscaped borders and screening for viewing from outside and privacy for mourners. While it is proposed to have buffers and planting around the property, a "park like feel" can be better provided through internal landscaping and creation of rooms within the landscape, rather than dense planting on the outer edges.

32. Will this be a priority to ensure it doesn't 'look like a cemetery'

Response

The industry norm is to create memorial parks and have a park look. Many new cemeteries being created in Australia include passive recreation including walking trails and garden settings for visitors to relax. This is a priority for the project.

33. Will the proposed cemetery along Burra Road be visually blocked with trees or wall so people accessing Mount Pleasant, will not see a cemetery?

Response

See above

34. Will this be a priority to ensure it does not look like a cemetery?

Response

See above

35. Mature aged trees planted need to be of a reasonable size.

Response

Landscaping using a variety of trees, shrubs and other garden plants will be designed as the project reaches development application and detailed design. Depending on the species, some establish quicker and healthier from smaller stock, while others benefit for mature stock. Appropriate stock will be selected when the design is complete. It should also be noted, with extensive landscaping in the initial years, many years of growth will have occurred before some sections of the cemetery are actually used for interments.

36. Will residents from Mount Campbell look on to a car park then?

Response

While parking will be required, one large car park will not service the site well and the site will be carefully landscaped to ensure the character of the surrounding rural setting is not diminished. Any car parks would be tree lined and screened.

Question related to further investigations

37. Have any of the presentations given Council pause for thought or areas for further investigations?

Response

All presentations received will be considered by Council when the matter is referred to a meeting following the close of submissions.

Question following presentation by Paul Hubbard

- 38. Portion 75 purchased in 1998, already zoned for cemetery use, why is this not being used as part of the cemetery?**

Response

Portion 75 is part of the existing Lanyon Dr Cemetery and does have both interments and ashes deposited within the bushland.

Questions submitted post meeting as indicated in the presentation by John Convine

- 39. Will there be any public transport to/from the site? Also is there currently any public transport to/from the existing cemetery?**

Response

The location was selected with the rapidly growing community in mind. In coming years, the Googong development will be only a short distance from the site. There is no public transport at present and investment in a service is a commercial decision and dependant on demand. Unfortunately, a site for a cemetery of this size is often on the periphery of towns, resulting private car being the main means of transport. When Lanyon Dr Cemetery was developed, it too was on the outskirts of town and did not have transport options. The Lanyon Dr Cemetery does not have a bus service, even though they pass by, with most regular visitors using private vehicles

- 40. How long will this site last for burials? From the meeting there seems to be very different views on how long this site will last. Have you changed your view on the time span for the site from information others presented in the meeting?**

Response

Based on all studies completed to date, projected population growth and interment trends, it is estimated that the site will have a 50-80 years' service life based on burials in perpetuity. Renewable tenure interments may extend this timeframe.

- 41. Where will the water come from for the site? There are existing properties using bore water for household and stock use that will be affected if the cemetery uses bore water. It was mentioned at the meeting that if the water table rises too high it will be pumped to lower it. If the level is kept low so as to not affect the burials and a drought happens the existing properties will not have the available water that they would normally have had in the past.**

Response

The water table referred to in the studies is the higher-level groundwater, above the rock shelf. This water is shallower and can easily be affected by rain events. This water moves through the site, following the rock layer, downhill towards the creek. It is this layer of groundwater which needs to be managed to prevent water entering burial plots and this water is not normally extracted for domestic use as it can also easily be affected by domestic onsite effluent treatment systems. The deeper groundwater, usually filtered through rock, is normally tapped into for domestic supply. Council will engage appropriately qualified consultants to develop an Integrated Water Management Plan for the site to address both supply and disposal matters when a development application is prepared, following the Planning Proposal if it is approved.

42. In a drought where will the water come from?

Response

An Integrated Water Manage Plan will address storage for dry times. However, it should be noted that the landscape would be designed with drought and climate change taken into consideration

43. Why was the study time extended to the beginning of this year for the data to be collected for rainfall? We will be having more droughts in the future, this just seemed to be fudging the figures to make them better for rainfall supply on the site.

Response

The initial study was carried along with all other environmental studies, however, the Natural Resources Access Regulator requested a minimum of 12 months monitoring to gauge the impact of differing weather events and trends. An increase in drying conditions and lowering of groundwater tables will be beneficial for cemetery operations.

44. What will be the cost of each of the different methods of water supply for the site be on a yearly basis?

Response

It is not possible to predict the annual operational cost for water supply this early in the land-use planning process, nor without having a final site confirmed and development conditions applied. These and other operational matters will be assessed once a Business Management Plan is developed.

45. Have the long term occupants (landlords and tenants) of the property and neighbouring properties been consulted on the effect of drought/floods on this site? It would seem to me that they would have accurate information to further gauge the future.

Response

More detailed review and design will take place if the Planning Proposal is approved and the project moves to the development application and detailed design phase. Consultants conducting flood and groundwater monitoring accessed recorded historical data and available evidence at the time.

46. Has the property been flooded to any extent in the past 50 years? Has Church Creek over flowed it banks in the past?

Response

It would be expected, based on rainfall data and flood modelling, that the property is subject to periodic flooding along Church Creek.

47. Some changes have been made to Church Creek in the past, how will this affect the water table levels and flooding of the site?

Response

There is no evidence of changes to the creek line as it traverses the property, apart from naturally occurring creek dynamics. Governing factors impacting flood levels are rather created at culverts under Old Cooma Rd.

48. Are properties in the new subdivision of Mt Pleasant allowed to have bores? If so how will this affect the site and the reverse, how will the site affect the subdivision?

Response

Access to groundwater is regulated by NRAR, not Council. Any legal bore would be licenced by NRAR, considering the total catchment availability.

49. Have any proper geological studies been done on the site to gauge the extent of the rock outcrops and depth of topsoil, other than the basic guesswork in the reports?

Response

Consultants conducted a geotechnical assessment of the site. Test bores were conducted across the site to determine the extent and depth of rock and review of all other known geological data from the area was also reviewed. The report is based on fieldwork and a qualified assessment.

50. How many funerals occur weekly at the existing cemetery and how many do you envisage weekly at the new site?

Response

Lanyon Cemetery receives 3-5 services per week with peak winter loads of 8-10 services per week. Average interments for Queanbeyan, Googong and Jerrabomberra are 300 per annum. It is envisaged the new site will initially experience approximately half these figures, with the two locations operating concurrently as approximately half of Lanyon's burials are second interments into existing graves.

51. Where does the water come from at the existing cemetery?

Response

The existing cemeteries in Queanbeyan, Bungendore and Braidwood use town water. All other rural cemeteries are not irrigated.

52. How much water is used at the existing cemetery?

Response

During the 2019-2020 financial year, the cemetery consumed 1430kl of water.

53. How much water will be used on the site and from what methods?

Response

It is not possible to predict the actual water consumption for a site that has not been approved and a landscape that has not yet been designed. Once the project reaches the development application stage and detailed design phase, Council will have a greater understanding of the water requirements. However, it should be noted, that future design will consider water source options and select plant species that are appropriate to the site and prevailing conditions, including potential impacts of climate change.

54. Where does the sewerage go at the existing cemetery?

Response

Only Lanyon Drive cemetery has amenities, and these are connected to the sewer network

55. This site is E4 Environmental Living, how do you classify a cemetery as fitting into Environmental Living (they are "dead") (sorry for the joke)? But it is still a serious question.

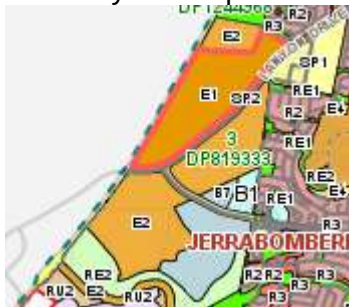
Response

E4 is applied for the visual value of the rural setting. The proposed Memorial Park would be designed with that in mind and retaining a beautiful rural setting is also important for the project's success.

56. What are the site zonings around and across Tharwa Road from the existing cemetery and all the way to the new retail development (example Aldi) including the Bush Cemetery? In your reply can you supply a detailed map of the areas/zones.

Response

The land across the road from the existing cemetery in Lanyon Drive and from the cemetery to Tomsitt Dr is E1 and E2 due to the significance of the fauna and flora onsite.



57. Why can't you add "cemetery" to these parcels of land?

Response

These locations contain State and Federally listed fauna, flora and habitat, requiring the highest level of environmental protection.

58. Has Council looked at other landscape/design styles of cemeteries to make it fit the existing zonings (example to reflect the wildlife/nature aspects of the environmental zonings) around the existing cemetery?

Response

The sites were assessed, initially back in the 1990s for those lands across the road and in 2015 for the balance heading back to Tomsitt Dr, however were rejected as not suitable for interments due to Geotech and threatened species.

59. What is the current size of the Bush Cemetery?

Response

The block size is approximately 16ha, however due to wide buffers and protected habitats, actual interments are restricted to selected sites throughout the bush.

60. At the meeting there was completely conflicting explanations on the procedure/method of the purchase of the land, what is the real explanation?

Response

Council has been looking for a site since 2009 with very high-level reviews narrowing down the search area. In 2015 a preferred search area was confirmed by Council and staff commenced a more detailed search. At its meeting on 26 August 2015, Council resolved that: Council authorise the General Manager to approach relevant property owners to secure options over land identified for potential cemetery purposes, to allow formal planning to proceed. At Council's meeting on February 2017, Council resolved to enter into a contract to purchase land at 1187 – 1241 Old Cooma Road, Royalla (Googong). All Council resolutions are made public after the meeting and minutes are placed on Council's website at <https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Council/Council-Business/Minutes-Agendas>.

61. Why has the process taken from 2009 till now to get this far; now it has become urgent?

Response

In the early years, high-level searches were conducted and Lanyon was estimated to have 5-8 years' service life. A great deal of work was done at the existing cemetery to extend this out to 10 years. The current process has been a high priority for the past five years; however the timeframe was extended with the request for longer periods of water testing. Staff have sufficient contingency to allow this current planning process to run and any period required for a DA. If the Planning Proposal is rejected, further options will need to be explored.

62. Why is it preferred to have separate exit and entry points when the existing cemetery has only one and works perfectly fine?

Response

From a management point of view, a single or separate entry does not impact the operation of the site, however the traffic advisor has recommended separation to allow easier traffic movement. This will be further investigated at the development application stage.

63. If this site is not passed by the NSW approving authority, what other options do you have to fall back on?

Response

Council has not considered alternate uses yet. Should the Planning Proposal be refused, Council will explore alternate uses at that time.

64. Wherever the new cemetery site is, will the existing cemetery be maintained to its existing standard of maintenance etc? If so why is the Riverside Cemetery in such a bad state of repair and lack of maintenance?

Response

Yes, the cemetery will still have services, due to second interments, and many loved ones visiting. Riverside Cemetery is maintained to the best of Council's ability, given it has been heavily impacted by high velocity floods and moving soils over the past 100 plus years. Under the Burra Charter, Council cannot alter existing heritage headstones, only ensure they are safe, and the site is mown.

- 65. In the K-FINAL Hydrogeological Assessment Report it states on pages 34/35 (4.3.1.1) "Deeper groundwater is physically separated from the shallow system in the unconsolidated material and can be protected through preservation of the intervening clay-rich aquitard." If this is broken it sounds a serious situation for the gravesites with water inundation and flooding of gravesites, it would not affect the current land uses used. How will you guarantee that this situation won't happen?**

Response

The reference is discussing the naturally occurring barrier between the two water layers. No excavation on site would be sufficiently deep to break this barrier. Breaches normally occur when properties sink a bore and fail to cap and case correctly. Bores are strictly controlled by NRAR to ensure the lower aquifers are protected.

- 66. In the K-FINAL Hydrogeological Assessment Report it states on page 35 (4.3.1.2) "The area appears to respond rapidly to pumping from a bore to the west (Mount Campbell Estate bore) and this may provide a suitable mitigation measure when water levels rise to depths shallower than 3 m below ground surface. How will doing this affect others using the groundwater in the area?"**

Response

The reference is to a potential mitigation method during high water, indicating that there are options available. Council will explore all options, with neighbouring properties in mind, if the planning proposal is approved.

Questions following presentation by Bohun Martin

- 67. The creek flows to Lake Burley Griffin. Is the ACT Government aware of the associated risk of water pollution/ contamination?**

Response

The ACT Government department responsible for the Canberra Cemeteries Trust is aware of the Planning Proposal for a cemetery on the site. Any potential contamination of water that is identified through monitoring of water quality will be dealt with on the site and therefore will have no impact on the wetlands or Lake Burley Griffith. This would be the same requirement for any site/location within the Queanbeyan-Palerang Local Government Area.

- 68. Why is Council not looking for an alternative site?**

Response

The background studies that have been carried out to inform this Planning Proposal have concluded that the site is suitable for a cemetery. There is enough land that has a soil depth > 3m and has a water table lower than 3m. Conducting studies required for the Planning Proposal is an expensive and time consuming exercise, so it is appropriate that they take place on the most suitable location. This does not mean Council is not still looking in case the proposal is rejected.

- 69. Please provide additional detail about the availability of space, as proposed by Bohun.**

Response

Studies indicate an area of 11.2 Ha is immediately suitable for interments and further land available with mitigation.

70. Please provide clarity of the approval and planning process.

Response

A report will be prepared for Council on the submissions received during the exhibition period. If Council decides to progress the Planning Proposal, the matter will be forwarded to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) together with all relevant supporting documentation, including details of submissions received. Should DPIE approve the rezoning, the next steps will be development of concept plans for the Memorial Park and lodgement of a development application which will be determined by the Southern Regional Planning Panel.

Questions following presentation by Wendy Hubbard

71. No council in NSW has had success building a cemetery zoned E4. What is the point of having zones if Council disregards restrictions?

Response

Having looked at several Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), a number of these do permit cemeteries with consent in their E4 zone (one example is the Cooma-Monaro LEP 2013).

72. Please provide insight/ personal views from the Mayor in relation to the secrecy relating to the land purchase.

Response

At its meeting on 26 August 2015, the former Queanbeyan City Council resolved that:

Council authorise the General Manager to approach relevant property owners to secure options over land identified for potential cemetery purposes, to allow formal planning to proceed.

At QPRC's meeting, February 2017, Council resolved:

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The Administrator, fulfilling the role of Council following the merger in 2016 and before the September 2017 election, acted in the interests of Council and the community by agreeing with staff recommendations that the report was "Commercial in Confidence" in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993*. All Council resolutions are contained in the minutes which are placed on Council's website at <https://www.qprc.nsw.gov.au/Council/Council-Business/Minutes-Agendas>

Questions following presentation by Tracy Howard

73. Bore water allocation – bore water is drying up, and residents are unable to use it for plants. If residents cannot use bore water, why would Council be able to?

Response

The quality of the bore water tested showed only slight salinity and acidity which should be fine for plants. If the quality should fail and prove unsuitable for plants, it is not uncommon to use additives to adjust the chemical make-up of the water. Council would have to apply to the Natural Resources Access Regulator in order to use groundwater just like any other landowner in the area.

Questions following presentation by Greg Evans

- 74. A previous site was ruled out as it flowed into the Molonglo River, but Church Creek flows into Jerrabomberra Creek, which flows into Lake Burley Griffin. Why is this different to the other site?**

The previous site was ruled out not because it flowed into the Molonglo River but that it was low lying and was much more vulnerable to flooding by the Molonglo River. Church Creek is an incised ephemeral creek which contains flood water within its banks in the most part. Localised flooding is made worse on the land because of an undersized culvert which inhibits the natural flow of the creek.

Additional questions from Bohun Martin

Question: What were the groundwater level readings across all monitoring bores at the site for the month of August 2020 when we experienced some medium rainfall?

QPRC Response: Logger data for August is scheduled to be downloaded in the coming weeks and records will be updated with that information. However, data from February 2020 including the 10 February downpour, has been monitored and is available in the report.

Follow up: Can council now provide the water depth readings for August?

QPRC Response:

Council has sought this data from the consultant and will provide it when available.

Question: The chosen site and proposal does not meet nine out of eleven recommendations from the National Resources Access Regulator for new cemeteries, and does not meet many of council's own criteria for a cemetery location, why is it still going ahead?

QPRC Response: In respect to the general recommendations of the National Resources Access Regulator's letter of 22 October 2018:

- (Recommendations 1-6) The proposed development can satisfy these recommendations through an on-going program of groundwater monitoring, continued awareness of rainfall patterns and the corresponding impacts on water tables, and with pumping as required to lower water tables after heavy rain. This will result in the groundwater being maintained at greater than 3m and gravesites can be excavated a minimum of 1.5m above the water table. A large portion of the site allows for this as indicated by the depth of rock which is 6m for much of the site.

- (Recommendation 7) Flood modelling has indicated that there is flooding adjacent to the creek. No gravesites will be located within these areas.

- (Rec 8) Gravesites would be excluded from zones where water tables are consistently shallow; adjacent to the creek and where the shallow substrate is very permeable.

In terms of Council's own criteria, the site is within the 10-15km distance from the urban area and from the 36.4ha of the site, there is a sizeable area with groundwater depths and depths to bedrock to allow for burials for the next 50 years. The flood zone adjacent to the creek can be avoided. It is not environmental land with high conservation value and any flora of interest such as native box gum woodland will be retained. It is a relatively flat site, can be accessed from main roads and can accommodate separated exit and entrances.

Follow up: If gravesites are being excluded from the zones where water tables are consistently shallow, why are the areas included in the diagrams showing burial capacity? If the areas of box gum woodland are to be retained, why are the areas included in the diagrams showing burial capacity? If the areas of flooding are going to be avoided, why are the areas included in the diagrams showing burial capacity?

QPRC response:

The number of hectares needed for interments includes areas that will be landscaped. The Riparian zone (40m each side of the creek) will be included as a landscape feature and if an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) reveals artefacts in areas between the 40m – 100m of archaeologically sensitive area then an Aboriginal Heritage Impact permit (AHIP) from OEH will be sought. The remnant box gum woodland may still accommodate graves but the landscaping around them may need to be of native species conducive to the ecological community.

Question: What is the projected interment rate used to determine capacity?

QPRC Response : Queanbeyan's current interment rate is approximately 300 per annum. This rate has been consistent for the last 10 years due to the trend away from burials toward cremation but balanced by increasing population. Capacity is determined by single interments per annum, for minimum term, then extended out to factor second or third interments.

Follow up: Why is growth not considered in the burial rates, when the area is undergoing significant growth (significantly more than in the past 10 years)? Why are burial numbers from the ACT not considered in burial rates?

QPRC response:

Growth rates have been considered. With the recorded and predicted population increases in Queanbeyan and the ACT, coupled with the increased tendency for cremation opposed to burial, the rate is stable. The ACT is experiencing the same consistency.

Question: Interment of embalmed corpses in the areas where water tables are above the minimum height below ground level will pose a risk to contamination of the aquifers below, which is used by many local bores for watering animals and vegetables. Will the chemical content of the water be monitored?

QPRC response: Advice from the funeral industry is that embalming is very rare. Embalmed bodies are placed in vaults or crypts above ground or a concrete lined plot in the ground. After embalming, the deceased is placed into a lead lined coffin, which is airtight. Embalmed bodies are not buried directly in the ground.

Follow up: Every open coffin funeral has partial embalming. Corpses themselves have poisonous chemicals. Will the chemical content of the groundwater be monitored?

QPRC response

The monitoring of water quality measures for any contaminants organic and inorganic.

Also, the point I wanted to clarify was from Tim Geyer where he stated that the Aboriginal Due Diligence report had only identified a 'PAD' which he explained as a potential archaeological area that then needs further investigation. I wanted to confirm this as an error, because the report clearly states the area identified is a confirmed archaeological sensitive area. Excerpt from the report below:

Conclusion

The Aboriginal Due Diligence Assessment aims to identify registered Aboriginal sites and/or sensitive landforms which may indicate the presence of Aboriginal sites and may therefore require further assessment and approval under Part 6 of the NPW Act. An extensive search of the relevant databases and literature enabled development of a predictive model for study area, identifying potential archaeological sensitivity and most common site types (Table 3). The predictive model identified that the margins of Church Creek were likely to be archaeologically sensitive, which was then confirmed during the visual field survey during which 11 Aboriginal archaeological sites were identified. All sites were within 100 m of the channel of Church Creek. Based on these findings it is highly likely that there are additional deposits of Aboriginal artefacts along the creek in a sub-surface and possibly *in situ* context.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this due diligence and the requirement of the NPW Act the following is recommended.

Recommendation One – Known sites cannot be Impacted without an AHIP

All the eleven Aboriginal archaeological sites identified during this assessment are protected under the NPW Act. It is an offence to disturb or damage these sites without first having obtained an Aboriginal Heritage Impact permit (AHIP) from OEH. To obtain an AHIP further archaeological assessment in the form of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA), including sub-surface testing, will be required. This process will take a minimum of 20 weeks and include mandatory consultation periods with Aboriginal stakeholders.

Recommendation Two – More detailed archaeological investigation

If any works or activity that could potentially disturb the ground surface including earthworks, construction, installation of services, landscaping (including planting and stream bank stabilisation measures) are proposed within the identified zone of

archaeological sensitivity (Figure 4) then an ACHA including sub-surface testing will be required.

Recommendation Three - General measures

- Aboriginal objects are protected under the NPW Act regardless if they are registered on AHIMS or not. If suspected Aboriginal objects, such as stone artefacts or midden material (shell) are

discovered during future works, works must cease in the affected area and an archaeologist called

in to assess the finds. If the finds are found to be Aboriginal objects, the OEH must be notified under section 89A of the NPW Act. Appropriate management and avoidance or approval under a section 90 AHIP should then be sought if Aboriginal objects are to be moved or harmed.

- In the extremely unlikely event that human remains are found, works should immediately cease, and the NSW Police should be contacted. If the remains are suspected to be Aboriginal, the OEH may also be contacted at this time to assist in determining appropriate management.

QPRC response

The due diligence assessment is only the first step in a process Council normally undertakes for large scale projects or projects in areas of high sensitivity. At the appropriate point in the development application phase, qualified archaeologists will be engaged to continue the process.