

STAFF REPORT

TO: Community Services Committee
FROM: Reserves Manager
REFERENCE: P100
DATE: 17 March 2008
SUBJECT: Natural Burials

PURPOSE

To provide information and options to the Committee about natural burials in regards to the request to provide an area in Council Cemeteries for natural burials.

BACKGROUND

During the Annual Plan submission time Council has received letters from members of the community asking for areas to be set aside in Council cemeteries for natural burials.

Lynda Hannah from Living Legacies has followed this up with Council staff and attended the last Community Services Committee meeting to share with Councillors the information she had gathered about natural burials on her fact finding trip to England.

Natural burials offer the Community another type of burial that currently isn't offered in our cemeteries. It reflects a philosophy of a low tech, chemical free and a low environmental impact type of burial.

The coffin is biodegradable, the body is not embalmed, and the burial is single depth where the soil organisms are more prevalent. There is no second burial or disinterment and the grave marker is very small or bio degradable.

The grave is then planted with natives so that the natural burial area goes back to a native area and requires minimum maintenance.

COMMENT/DISCUSSION

This is a very different style of burial that is not offered in our cemeteries. It differs dramatically with our more traditionally laid out cemeteries which are very regular and require high levels of maintenance.

Natural areas take up more room and would need to be in an area where the native plants could grow and not cause issues for neighbours or disturb the more traditional use of the existing cemeteries.

I believe that Motueka, Spring Grove and Rototai Cemeteries would have areas in them that could be used for this type of burial. However I would propose that the main plantings took place behind the graves and that small native shrubs and grasses were planted on the graves to prevent disturbance to the adjoining graves when being excavated.

If the Council decided that it would be beneficial to the community to provide such areas in cemeteries, it would be useful to have a section in the proposed Cemetery Operating Procedures Policy outlining the use of these areas and have the families agree to the conditions set out in the policy.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is not significant under Council's significance policy.

AFFECTED PARTIES

Tasman District Council residents.

OPTIONS

- 1 Do nothing; continue to provide the traditional type of burial service that is currently offered.
- 2 Set aside areas in nominated Council cemeteries to provide a natural burial option to Tasman District Council residents and instruct staff to work with Lynda Hannah on a set of guidelines regarding the management and maintenance of these areas that will be incorporated into the proposed Cemetery Operating Procedures Policy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee agree to “set aside areas in nominated Council cemeteries to provide a natural burial option to Tasman District Council residents and instruct staff to work with Lynda Hannah on a set of guidelines regarding the management and maintenance of these areas that will be incorporated into the proposed Cemetery Operating Procedures Policy.”

Beryl Wilkes
Reserves Manager

[http://tdctoday:82/shared documents/meetings/council/committees and subcommittees/community services committee/reports/2008/rcs080327 report natural burials.doc](http://tdctoday:82/shared%20documents/meetings/council/committees%20and%20subcommittees/community%20services%20committee/reports/2008/rcs080327%20report%20natural%20burials.doc)