MEDIA RELEASE
The Hon Tony Kelly MLC
Minister for Lands
Leader of the House in the Legislative Council
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Monday, 9 November, 2009

Advisory Committee to drive sustainable burial policy

Minister for Lands, Tony Kelly, today said that the Rees Government would establish a Crown Cemeteries Advisory Committee (CCAC) to advise the Government on ways to ensure ongoing supply of affordable and accessible burial space in NSW.

“The committee will have representatives from public cemeteries, heritage organisations, government and the community.

“It will provide advice to government and keep the community informed on burial issues,” Mr Kelly said.

“The committee will be initially asked to investigate and consult on the implementation of limited and renewable tenure in NSW.

“We will always cater for traditional burials and beliefs, and ensure that heritage issues are not compromised, but the government makes no apology in consulting further and wider before any decision is made.

“The CCAC will also act as a point of contact between government and industry in efforts to offer natural burial alternatives, as well as encouraging greater reuse of family graves.”

Mr Kelly called on interested members of the public to apply for the three community positions on the committee.

Further details on the committee and applications forms are available at www.lpma.nsw.gov.au

The President of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Association of NSW, Michael McMahon, welcomed the government’s response as a positive move towards more sustainable cemeteries which would offer more choice for families.

“The wishes of families should be paramount in being allowed to place their loved ones in a cemetery of their choice either through burial or cremation and not be faced with having to travel long distances and being unable to make frequent visits of their loved ones.

“These new measures will go a long way to ensure NSW is ready and able to meet the needs of future generations through offering ‘green burials’ and other sustainable practices, backed with an advisory committee to seriously deal with this very real issue.”

Mr Kelly said that in response to consultation with the community and industry stakeholders, the Government has approved amendments to the by-laws governing applicable cemeteries to:

- limit the sale of burial plots in any one cemetery to one plot per person;
- allow cemetery trusts to determine ownership of burial rights where there is uncertainty;
• reduce the minimum period before unused burial rights can be revoked and reallocated from 60 to 50 years;
• revoke rights of burial in order to facilitate cemetery renewal programs under strict conditions; and
• extend the Crown Lands (General Reserves) by-law 2006 to all Crown cemeteries managed by a reserve trust.

Mr Kelly said the CCAC would continue to engage with the community in securing additional land for future cemeteries as well as on sustainable burial options.

“There is no single solution to the diminishing available burial space in Sydney.

“Whilst cremation and reuse are options for some, for others it is simply not possible.

“Renewable options need to be explored as part of the solution as they offer a cheaper, sustainable alternative without affecting the ongoing duty of cemetery managers to care for the deceased in perpetuity.

“These methods are widely practiced throughout the world and in Australian cities such as Perth and Adelaide to extend the life of cemeteries.

“The new CCAC will review these strategies, take on board the views of the broader public, and report back to government with a set of recommendations on ways to build on these initial steps.”

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