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| Community advisory committee guidelines |
| Class A cemetery trusts |
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# Introduction

The community advisory committee (CAC) guidelines are designed to assist Class A cemetery trusts to establish effective CACs to ensure consumer and community views are canvassed in relation to cemetery trust services.

Under s. 18D of the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* (the Act), at least one CAC must be established by a Victorian Class A cemetery trust:

1. For the purpose of liaising with communities to which a Class A cemetery trust provides cemetery or crematoria services, a Class A cemetery trust
   1. must appoint one community advisory committee
   2. may appoint any additional community advisory committees it considers appropriate.
2. A Class A cemetery trust must establish a community advisory committee referred to in subsection (1)(a) within 12 months of becoming a Class A cemetery trust.
3. A Class A cemetery trust must include in its annual report of operations a report on the activities of its CAC.

# Roles and responsibilities

A cemetery trust’s CAC has two critical roles:

1. To provide advice in relation to the integration of consumer and community views at all levels of the cemetery trust’s operations, planning and policy development.
2. To advocate to the trust on behalf of consumers and local communities.

The CAC is a high-level committee of volunteers appointed in an advisory capacity and has no executive authority. The CAC:

* provides a mechanism for consumer and community engagement in cemetery trust services
* provides strategic advice from consumer and community perspectives in relation to cemetery trust services, including major initiatives and changes
* advises the cemetery trust on community issues relating to its communication with local communities.

The cemetery trust and the CAC have different but complementary roles. The cemetery trust has a responsibility to:

* develop performance indicators that evaluate the effectiveness of consumer engagement initiatives
* establish terms of reference for the CAC (see terms of reference template at Appendix 1)
* ensure those appointed to the CAC represent the views of local communities
* ensure the CAC is kept informed about the cemetery trust’s major strategic issues and developments
* seek advice from the CAC on issues as required
* develop a community engagement plan with the CAC
* conduct a biennial review of the CAC
* ensure sufficient resources are available to implement the community engagement plan
* promote the value of consumer and community engagement in cemetery trust services
* make the trust’s strategic plan available to the CAC.

The CAC has a responsibility to:

* develop and comply with a communication protocol which establishes guidelines for CAC members in relation to their communication with internal and external stakeholders
* advise the cemetery trust on consumer and community views in relation to service delivery, planning and policy development
* identify and advise the cemetery trust on priority areas and issues requiring consumer and community engagement
* provide input into the cemetery trust’s strategic planning process
* provide practical advice that takes into account the trust’s financial, legal and statutory obligations
* develop a strategic community engagement plan for approval by the cemetery trust
* advocate on behalf of the community
* facilitate communication between consumer and community groups and the cemetery trust.

# Accountability

The CAC is accountable to the cemetery trust and the cemetery trust is accountable to the Minister for Health. The department is responsible for administering the Act and overseeing implementation of government policy relating to the cemeteries sector.

The cemetery trust is responsible for consulting with the CAC in relation to major strategic changes to policy or services to the community.

# Reporting

The cemetery trust is responsible for reporting on the activities of its CAC in its annual report of operations. The cemetery trust will also receive and review the minutes of CAC meetings and, where appropriate, provide feedback to the CAC.

The cemetery trust, in consultation with the CAC, should establish formal processes of reporting and communication between itself and the CAC. The parameters within which CAC members may communicate information about the cemetery trust’s services to the community should be agreed and documented. This agreement will need to consider issues such as:

* the expectation that members of the CAC will advise the cemetery trust on strategies for communicating with the community
* the need to establish long-term working relationships between the CAC and the trust based on mutual respect, trust and confidence.

# Membership

CAC members contribute specialist knowledge and expertise and represent consumer and community perspectives. Members should be active in the community, with strong community networks and a sound understanding of local or regional issues. Members need to have the capacity to reflect on and present community issues, rather than focusing on personal concerns or individual issues.

In appointing members to a CAC, a trust must give preference to people who are not:

* funeral directors
* stonemasons
* directly involved or employed in the provision of cemetery sector services.

Appointment to a CAC is non-delegable and must be in line with the Act. Members of a CAC may not:

* give direction to trust staff or trust members
* make decisions in relation to trust expenditure
* make public comments on behalf of the trust
* enter into any contract or hold themselves out to represent the trust in any capacity.

## Recruitment

Potential members of the CAC should be provided with sufficient information to ensure they have a clear understanding of the membership roles and responsibilities. Cemetery trusts should develop an information package incorporating details about the roles, responsibilities and support available to the CAC and its members. This package should be available for distribution to anyone that has expressed interest in membership.

Where the CAC has been established for some time, potential new members should be encouraged and provided with the opportunity to attend and observe current CAC meetings.

Applicants for CAC membership should be sought through a range of strategies, including:

* open advertisements
* seeking recommendations of individuals from peak bodies
* directly approaching individuals with relevant experience.

## Selection criteria

The CAC should comprise up to 10 members who are appointed by the cemetery trust. Composition will include two internal trust members, one of whom will act as the chairperson. Criteria for selection of CAC members should be determined by the cemetery trust, and should include the following considerations:

* Members of the CAC should reflect the perspectives of the communities served by the cemetery trust and bring to the CAC knowledge of the views and beliefs of relevant community groups.
* Members should have some connection to established formal or informal community or consumer networks, although appointment of individual consumers with the capacity to develop such links should also be considered.

## Selection process

The selection process for appointment to the CAC must be fair and transparent. The process must ensure that individuals or groups are informed about the CAC and the selection process, and that prospective members are encouraged to apply.

Cemetery trusts will need to define the constituency of the communities they serve and try to ensure that the diversity in their communities is reflected in the composition of the CAC.

## Terms of appointment

To ensure continuity and viability of the CAC membership, initial appointments should be for two or three years, with the opportunity for reappointment for a further period of up to three years. Cemetery trusts may also consider strategies such as staggered terms, allowing appointment for two consecutive terms of office, and requiring members to have a one-year break after two terms before they are eligible for reappointment.

Cemetery trusts will provide written documentation to CAC members confirming their individual terms and conditions of appointment.

## Meeting attendance

CAC meetings may be attended by non-members from time to time:

* The CAC chairperson may invite other members of management or staff or parties external to the cemetery trust (such as providers of cemetery related services) to attend a CAC meeting as a resource (for example, to provide specialist advice).
* Non-members of the CAC may be asked by the chairperson to withdraw for all or any part of any meeting.
* An appropriate trust staff member will attend each meeting as a minute-taker.

A clear majority of the people present at each CAC meeting should be CAC members.

# Resources

The CAC will need to be provided with a baseline audit of community engagement activities across the cemetery trust’s operations in order to develop and progress the community engagement plan.

A senior trust manager should be appointed to ensure the CAC has adequate access to qualified personnel to assist with undertaking research, assisting in the development of community networks and drafting submissions and responses on the CAC’s behalf. If deemed necessary, an appropriately qualified community development officer or similar may be appointed by the trust to assist the CAC.

## Secretariat

The trust will provide limited secretariat support to the CAC through the provision of an executive support officer or other cemetery trust staff as determined by the chief executive officer.

## Finance

In its overall budget planning process the cemetery trust should plan for the implementation of the community engagement plan and ensure adequate funds are allocated where appropriate.

## Meeting place

CACs are comprised of volunteer members who will meet as agreed by the cemetery trust and the CAC members. The terms of reference will reflect the agreed frequency and length of meetings. The activities of the CAC may be constrained by time so it is essential that the CAC develops a clear focus for its efforts through an annual work plan.

The cemetery trust will support the CAC by:

* providing access to car parking
* scheduling meetings at mutually agreed times suitable for members
* providing adequate refreshments
* reimbursing costs incurred by CAC members in their responsibilities, such as travel and any other reasonable expenses (the trust’s decision on what constitutes a reasonable expense is final).

## Orientation

Adequate orientation is essential to the success of the CAC. Each cemetery trust should develop a formal orientation program that can be delivered flexibly to meet the needs of CAC members. This should include an:

* orientation to the cemetery trust organisation
* outline of the role of the cemetery trust
* introduction to the cemetery trust’s code of ethics and conduct and communication protocol
* introduction to the senior management team of the cemetery trust
* overview of local issues, services and initiatives
* overview of any existing or former consumer or community engagement undertaken by the cemetery trust.

In addition, the cemetery trust may provide relevant training or workshops to CAC members when appropriate. Members should be encouraged to observe other CACs in action and learn about their activities where appropriate.

# Evaluation and monitoring

In consultation with the CAC, cemetery trusts should undertake regular audits of consumer and community engagement. The auditing of consumer engagement across the cemetery trust should be integrated into audit and evaluation activities.

The CAC and the cemetery trust should undertake an annual review of the CAC. The results of this review should be recorded in the cemetery trust’s annual report and include information pertaining to meeting attendance by all members, quorum for scheduled meetings, processes and issues for consideration by the CAC.

If any of these requirements have not been met, the cemetery trust should investigate the reasons and review the CAC processes. The cemetery trust may need to consider providing additional resources to the CAC.

# Appendix 1: Terms of reference template

## 1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the (insert name) Cemeteries Trust (the trust) Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is to provide advice and guidance to the trust to assist in carrying out its community engagement responsibilities, as well as its statutory requirements under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003* (the Act) and the Cemeteries and Crematoria Regulations 2025.

## 2 Objectives

2.1 To ensure that community and consumer views are considered in the planning and delivery of cemetery trust services.

2.2 To provide advice in relation to the integration of consumer and community views at all levels of cemetery trust operations, planning and policy development.

## 3 Responsibilities

3.1 Advise the trust on strategies to enhance and promote effective consumer and community engagement, assisting the trust to carry out its responsibilities and commitments relating to consumer and community engagement and its impact on service outcomes.

3.2 Advocate to the trust on behalf of consumers and the community and advise the trust on priority areas and issues requiring consumer and community input and involvement.

3.3 In consultation with the trust, develop a community engagement plan for consideration by the trust and monitor implementation and effectiveness of the approved plan.

3.4 Monitor the implementation of the trust’s strategic plan as it relates to consumer engagement.

## 4 Membership

4.1 Composition

1. As determined by the trust and in accordance with the Act, the CAC shall comprise ten members whose skills and experience reflect the particular needs and interests of a broad range of consumers and communities, including people from diverse backgrounds such as emerging communities.
2. The trust will give preference to members who are not:
   * + funeral directors
     + stonemasons
     + directly involved or employed in the provision of cemetery sector services.
3. Members will:
   * + be aged 18 years or over
     + be provided with an induction and access to mentoring support upon their appointment
     + receive reimbursement of reasonable travel and parking costs incurred by participating in meetings of the CAC or related advisory or reference groups.
4. Membership will include:
   * + up to two current Class A cemetery trust members as determined by the trust (one of which will act as chairperson of the CAC)
     + up to eight external community members who represent:
       - the diversity of local communities
       - a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds
       - people with disability or specific access requirements
       - consumers of the trust’s products and services (consumer advocate).

4.2 Terms of appointment

1. All appointments made by the trust are for up to three years.
2. Appointment to the CAC is non-delegable and must be in line with the Act.
3. Members may not:
   * + give direction to trust staff
     + make decisions in relation to trust expenditure
     + make public comments on behalf of the trust
     + enter into any contract or hold themselves out to represent the trust in any capacity.
4. Terms of appointment will vary to ensure continuity.
5. The trust should appoint a person to fill a vacancy in the membership within three months of the vacancy arising where possible and if deemed necessary by the CAC and/or the trust.
6. The trust may consider the termination of a CAC member upon advice from the CAC. Termination of a CAC member must be based on reasonable grounds.

## 5 Meetings

5.1 Attendance

1. The CAC chairperson may invite other members of management or staff or parties external to the cemetery trust (such as providers of cemetery related services) to attend a CAC meeting as a resource (for example, to provide specialist advice).
2. Non-members may be asked by the CAC chairperson to withdraw for all or any part of any meeting.
3. An appropriate trust staff member will attend each meeting as a minute-taker.

5.2 Frequency

1. A minimum of (insert number) meetings per year for (insert number) hours each meeting.
2. Members are required to attend at least 75 per cent of scheduled meetings annually unless prior approval is sought from the chairperson with a valid reason for the leave of absence.

5.3 Quorum

1. A quorum shall consist of over 50 per cent of appointed members present at the meeting, one of whom shall be the CAC chairperson or a nominee of the CAC chairperson.
2. A clear majority of sitting members shall be consumer/community representatives.

5.4 Agendas

1. The CAC chairperson is responsible for developing the agenda for CAC meetings in conjunction with the cemetery trust CEO.
2. Items for the agenda shall be submitted two weeks prior to the meeting date.
3. The agenda will be circulated with relevant meeting papers the week prior to the meeting date.
4. All communication pertaining to the CAC must be undertaken through the CAC chairperson.

5.5 Minutes

1. Proceedings, findings and recommendations of all CAC meetings must be minuted.
2. Draft minutes shall be distributed to all members no later than 21 days following the meeting unless otherwise agreed by the CAC.
3. Minutes are approved by the CAC at its subsequent meeting.

## 6 Confidentiality

6.1 Members will be subject to the confidentiality requirements of the trust.

6.2 Members are responsible for ensuring that the individual confidentiality and privacy of consumers and community members and their issues, as discussed within meetings, is maintained.

6.3 Release of information relating to trust services development and management shall be authorised by the chairperson of the cemetery trust.

## 7 Reporting

7.1 The CAC chairperson or the chairperson of the meeting must report the findings and recommendations of the CAC to the trust after each CAC meeting.

7.2 The CAC’s formal report and feedback to the trust is made through its meeting minutes.

7.3 Membership and activities of the CAC will be reported in the cemetery trust’s annual report.

## 8 Outcomes

8.1 The CAC develops and implements a community engagement plan.

8.2 The CAC develops an annual work plan that reflects the community engagement plan outcomes.

8.3 The CAC conducts an annual performance self-evaluation regarding its functions.