

HAWKESBURY CITY HERITAGE CEMETERIES

Working to protect our priceless heritage

The Hawkesbury District is one of the oldest European settlement areas in Australia. It contains the most intact collection of early settlement heritage items in New South Wales. Hawkesbury City Council is working in conjunction with the community to protect and preserve the district's heritage.

What is heritage?

Heritage includes natural and cultural features as well as many Aboriginal places. There are more than 500 European places listed on the Heritage Schedule of the Local Environmental Plan. More places will be added as they are identified.



The precious heritage assets of the Hawkesbury district include the early churches, cemeteries and burial sites. Many of these are located in the Macquarie Towns and the rural farming areas but they are known to exist elsewhere in the district. These places have special significance to a broad cross section of the community.



Why are cemeteries special places?

Many generations of Australians have descended from the early European Hawkesbury settlers. One of the precious heritage resources of the district is, therefore, its cemeteries. These places have the ability to demonstrate our history more authentically than any other medium. However these fragile places, individually and as a group are often vulnerable. Hawkesbury City Council seeks to ensure that these places will be conserved and remain as a visible legacy of the rich settlement history and heritage of the district.



Hawkesbury City Council is embarking on a strategy of conserving these wonderful places so that the whole community can continue to gain an appreciation of our European heritage.

Who is responsible for cemeteries?

Many of the cemeteries in the district are cared for by Hawkesbury City Council, which maintains the grounds and oversees conservation works. The council is not responsible for the graves, which are assigned to individuals and remain in their care or the care of their descendants. The council is not permitted to undertake any work to graves or burial sites except in extreme instances, when they may act to protect people from injury. Under normal circumstances only the families of the dead may undertake any works to the monuments, graves and burial sites. However the best standard of care is achieved when the council, community and churches work cooperatively together to care for the cemeteries.

Some of the most important cemeteries in the Hawkesbury remain under the control of the churches. For example the historic cemeteries at St Matthews Anglican Church, Windsor, and St Peter's Anglican Church, Richmond, are maintained by those churches.

Some cemeteries are listed as places of State and Local significance and approval for some works may require the approval of the NSW Heritage Council and/or Hawkesbury City Council.

Special Skills required to Conserve Monuments

The care of monuments usually requires the skills of specialists such as monumental masons and letter cutters. Works to stone monuments and historic graves could require the skills of trained conservators. Unskilled persons should not attempt to clean or restore a monument without first obtaining appropriate advice.



Cemetery records

The records relating to a cemetery are essential to the story it tells. The records must be conserved as well as the monuments and graves.

Vegetation and Landscape Features

The plantings in cemeteries can be highly significant. Rare species of plants are known to exist only at some cemeteries. The families of the dead might have planted these or they might have been self-sown. Great care must be exercised to avoid the inadvertent loss of important historical plantings. Invasive plants or trees may need to be removed to prevent damage to graves and monuments.



Is it necessary to obtain approval to undertake work to a cemetery?

Grave plots remain in Crown ownership although the family of the deceased normally owns burial rights, which includes the right to erect monuments. The cemetery managers (Hawkesbury City Council or individual churches) can limit the kind of monument and specify who can construct monuments and how they must be constructed. The Council and the owners both have responsibilities regarding the public safety of monuments.

Sources of Help

The National Trust has produced Guidelines for Cemetery Conservation, which can be obtained from the Trust (www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au) or from the Trust's Cemeteries Officer on 9258 0169. Additional information is available at websites: www.ccansw.org.au and www.public-cemeteries.net. Hawkesbury City Council can provide contact details for skilled masons and other tradespersons suitable to undertake work on monuments in the district.

Friends Groups

Hawkesbury City Council supports groups of 'friends' of the cemeteries to assist with their care. The 'friends' will assist with the recording of information, planning conservation works and undertaking some minor works in conjunction with Council's Parks and Recreation staff. If you wish to play a role you should contact the Manager of Parks and Recreation at Hawkesbury City Council.

How to obtain more information

Further information can be obtained from Hawkesbury City Council's Building and Development Section.

Telephone: 4560 4565, Fax: 4560 4400 and E-mail: council@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au

Address: Hawkesbury City Council, PO Box 146, WINDSOR NSW 2756

*This document contains important information.
If you do not understand it, contact the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131450.*

