

BREWARRINA SHIRE COUNCIL



All communications to be addressed to the General Manager

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OUR REF:
YOUR REF:

Monday, 3 February 2020

Ms Jennifer Vincent
Director Pricing
IPART
P.O Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop
NSW 1240

Dear Jennifer,

Re; IPART Interim Report on the Review of Internment Costs

I thank you for taking my call earlier today and reiterate that the review, like so many undertaken by IPART, should not be a one size fits all approach, in fact the entire review is irrelevant to remote rural Councils such as Brewarrina.

I have read with some complacency the Interim Report on Internment Costs and offer the following commentary;

1. In Brewarrina Shire there is no shortage of available land for cemeteries and many cemeteries are private and maintained by landowners or are sacred burial sites not necessarily identified.
2. The cost of development is immaterial and holding costs do not have any impact on costs.
3. Council recovers the cost of burial and nominates an annual fee for the purchase of a gravesite within the cemeteries maintained by Council. The current charge for burials is as detailed in the published Council fees and charges with burial fees at actual cost and the highest charge for a plot is currently \$575.
4. Council is unable to recover the cost of maintaining the cemetery from the fees charged and never will. In a rural community there are often more bodies of the dead in the community cemetery than there are living and Council provides a community service.
5. There is no renewable tenure, once buried you hopefully remain that way, although occasionally, Council has had the embarrassment of attempting to dig a fresh grave where one already exists. This is a predicament that exists where old cemetery trusts have kept imperfect records.
6. There is no incentive for more efficient costs, the fees are published in the annual fees and charges based on the cost to bury someone and a nominal fee for the burial plot based more on providing a community service than the cost of maintaining the cemetery. (Refer comment in 4 above)
7. The requirement to set aside funds for perpetual maintenance is ridiculous. Council subsidises the cost of maintaining cemeteries, the current annual budget cost provision, net of fees collected, is around \$40k per annum.

**THE BREWARRINA SHIRE IS SITUATED IN THE LIVING OUTBACK OF NEW SOUTH WALES
WITHIN THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN, ON AUSTRALIA'S LONGEST RIVER SYSTEM.**

Finally, I note recommendation 6, based on the previous observation 11 (on page 9), will greatly excite the accountants, as it suggests that the extent of legacy costs from past interments is not known.

Presumably, someone will undoubtedly seize upon this comment and Council will be required to pay an expert to annually assess the value of the size of the liability for perpetual maintenance, thereby no doubt doubling the current forecast loss from maintaining cemeteries.

Please be so kind as to note the issues raised and exclude Brewarrina Shire and other rural areas from such irrelevant reviews.



General Manager