

Future of Cemetery Services

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is Council undertaking this engagement?

Council is seeking early community input to understand how we should plan for future cemetery and memorial services—balancing regional access, affordability, sustainability, and cultural needs. We are planning ahead to ensure services continue to meet the needs of a growing and changing community. While there is still space available at Hervey Bay's Polson Cemetery for burials, the site cannot be expanded further due to its location. Maryborough Cemetery has significant long-term capacity, with enough land available for burials for hundreds of years at current rates. This early engagement will help inform future decision making.

What options are being considered?

Council is exploring a range of options, including:

- Establishing a new cemetery in Hervey Bay
- Utilising the capacity at Maryborough Cemetery as a regional facility
- Expanding alternative options such as cremation, natural burials, and memorial gardens
- Working with private providers to deliver cemetery services
- A combination of the above

Community feedback will help identify which approaches best reflect the region's values and priorities.

Is Maryborough Cemetery a viable long-term alternative?

Yes. Maryborough Cemetery has significant capacity—up to 120,000 burial plots—equating to more than 500 years of service at current burial rates. However, accessibility, family connection, and cultural expectations are important factors. This engagement aims to understand whether using Maryborough is acceptable to Hervey Bay residents or if a local option is still preferred.

What are the financial implications of building a new cemetery?

A new cemetery in Hervey Bay would require:

- **Upfront costs of approximately \$8 million**, including land acquisition, planning, infrastructure, and facilities
- **Annual operating costs of \$157,200**
- **An estimated 63-year payback period**, assuming average annual revenue of \$285,000

These costs are in addition to current costs. Community views on affordability and willingness to invest in a new facility are essential to the decision-making process.

Why can't Council just expand Polson Cemetery?

Polson Cemetery is constrained by surrounding land use, environmental considerations, and limited available space. Expansion is not currently viable due to these physical limitations. That's why we are planning early and alternative options are being explored.

Will memorialisation & ashes interments continue to be available at Polson Cemetery into the future?

Yes, memorialisation and ashes interments will continue to be available at Polson Cemetery for the long term—well into the next 100 years. While the site cannot be expanded further due to its location, there is still availability for burials at this time, and cremation-related services will remain an ongoing option.

Will Council be considering environmentally sustainable options?

Yes. The engagement includes discussion of natural burials, ashes memorialisation, and reduced-impact interment options. Environmental and land use implications will also be considered, particularly in relation to bushland, farmland, and urban growth.

Will religious and cultural practices be considered in future planning?

Absolutely. Council acknowledges that burial and memorial practices are deeply personal and often linked to spiritual, cultural, and community identity. Engagement activities are specifically seeking input from indigenous representatives, faith groups, multicultural organisations, and culturally diverse communities to ensure their views are a part of the feedback process.

What happens if the community supports a new cemetery?

If there is strong community support for a new cemetery, Council will consider the next steps, including feasibility studies, site investigations, funding models etc. This is an early conversation, no decisions have been made at this stage.

What if I support alternatives like cremation or natural burial?

The engagement seeks feedback on a wide range of preferences, including cremation, natural burial, memorial gardens, and non-traditional approaches. Your input will help ensure that future services reflect evolving community expectations, not just traditional burial needs.

Are natural burials currently available on the Fraser Coast?

Yes, natural burials are available at the **Nikenbah Natural Cemetery** – Queensland's first natural burial site established on Council-owned land. The cemetery offers eco-conscious burial options. The cemetery supports both sustainability and regeneration of the natural environment.

Is Council considering private operators?

Yes. One option under consideration is enabling private providers to establish and manage cemetery services within the region. Community feedback will help Council understand community support for this approach and any expectations around service quality, affordability, and oversight.

Has Council already made a decision?

No. This is a genuine community conversation. No decision has been made. Council is committed to listening to community feedback before proceeding with any formal proposals.

What will happen to existing cemeteries like Polson and Nikenbah?

Existing cemeteries will continue to be maintained and operated by Council. The current engagement is focused on **future planning**, not changes to current services.

Is this consultation only for Hervey Bay residents?

No. While Polson Cemetery can't be expanded further due to physical limitations, future planning may affect residents across the Fraser Coast. Everyone is encouraged to share their views—whether you live in Hervey Bay Maryborough, Howard, Tiaro, or other Fraser Coast communities.

What will Council do with the feedback collected?

All feedback will be analysed and compiled into an **Engagement Report**, which will be presented to Council. The report will inform future decision-making and be shared publicly via the Engagement Hub and other channels.

How can I participate in the engagement process?

You can get involved in several ways:

- Complete the **online survey** or a printed version
- Attend a **community drop-in session**
- Share your thoughts via the **Engagement Hub**: frasercoast.engagementhub.com.au/cemetery-services