

<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE</b>  <b>12 SEPTEMBER 2012</b>	<b>8</b>
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MCLEOD STREET PIONEER CEMETERY CONSERVATION  
MANAGEMENT PLAN

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

**It is recommended that Council:**

- a) receives and notes the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery Conservation Management Plan;**
- b) reaffirms recognition of the historical significance of the Cemetery; and**
- c) adopts the recommendations outlined in the Plan as a guiding tool for maintenance and ongoing conservation of the site.**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In accordance with best practice heritage management principles, Council has recently commissioned heritage professionals to prepare a revised Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery. The revised Plan identifies critical threats to the fabric of the cemetery and provides policies and procedures to address them.

The McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery is the oldest surviving cemetery in Cairns and as such, marks the final burial place of 2,500 of our earliest residents. The Cemetery is listed in the National Trust of Queensland Heritage Register as well as the Queensland Heritage Register. The listing places legal requirements on the owner and manager of the property to manage the site in accordance with its documented significance.

To provide advice on the management of the site, Council received dollar-for-dollar grant funding from the Queensland Government's Community Memorials Restoration Program in 2011. The CMP was undertaken by professional archaeology and conservation specialists, Maxim Consulting Services Pty. Ltd.

The CMP contains ten conservation policies and actions that should be adopted as the basis for the ongoing management of the Cemetery in accord with best practice management of a state heritage-listed former cemetery.

In order to implement the recommended actions included in the Plan, additional funds will be required over the next five-years to ensure adequate maintenance and resources are committed for the site. In particular, priority actions include:

- Repairs of internal pathways to minimise safety issues.
- Increased maintenance commensurate with the site's values and community importance.
- Enhanced site interpretation and presentation.

Where possible, Cairns Regional Council staff will identify and seek suitable funding opportunities as they arise to ensure the proposed tasks are implemented.

**BACKGROUND:**

The McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery in Cairns is the earliest remaining cemetery in Cairns and as such, the resting place of a wide cross-section of the earliest post-contact community of the town.

The value of the historical record preserved in the fabric of the McLeod Street Cemetery has been recognised as significant at a State level. In 1976, the cemetery was one of the earliest places listed in the National Trust of Queensland Heritage Register. With the passage of the Queensland Heritage Act in 1992, the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery was assessed and listed in the Queensland Heritage Register.

In 1988, Council commissioned a Conservation Plan for the Cemetery, which consequently guided an active program of preservation activities within the cemetery. The plan also proposed recognising contemporary uses of the cemetery by formalising a walking path through the grounds and by providing information to schools and local tourism programs. In 2001, Council commissioned appendices to the Conservation Plan, which identified the key conservation issues for the Cemetery at that time and developed policies for addressing them.

In the past two years, vandalism has taken place with a number of headstones desecrated. This created a great deal of concern within the community about the management and maintenance of the site. The public concern revealed that there is a great deal of community regard for the site and that the Cemetery needs to be activated as a heritage asset. While there has been enormous effort in the past to identify and share information about the Cemetery through school materials, guided walks and open days, this program has lapsed in recent years.

In order to initiate a program of community engagement and activities based on raising the profile of the Cemetery, Council staff have recently undertaken the following:

- Stakeholder consultation with interdepartmental CRC staff; DNRE; Cairns Historical Society; Cairns Family History Group and heritage consultants.
- Repair of broken headstones, under the advice and guidance of heritage professionals.
- Fencing of the Cemetery in order to secure the site at night.
- Partnership with Cairns Family History Group to implement guided walks.
- Partnership with community Church group volunteers who wish to provide regular clean-ups of the site.

In accordance with best practice heritage management principles, Council also recently commissioned qualified heritage consultants to revise and update the original Conservation Management Plan and addendum to guide the management, maintenance and interpretation of the Cemetery for the next decade. The revised CMP addresses the following items:

- Program for removing problem vegetation and identifying suitable replacement plantings.
- Program for removing vegetation on plinths, within the resources of the existing maintenance regimes.
- Review of the watering regime at the cemetery, including an assessment of its impacts on the cemetery fabric and recommendations for future watering schedules.
- Program for the use of herbicides around graves at the cemetery.
- Guidelines for standardised plaques/memorial markers, taking into account systems already in place at other CRC cemeteries.
- Schedule of short, medium and long term conservation works.
- Schedule for maintenance.
- Induction program suitable for CRC cemetery maintenance crews, so that they understand the heritage significance of the site and how this impacts on maintenance. To be developed in association with CRC cemetery crews.
- Timetable for future reviews of the CMP.

In addition, the consultant was requested to provide interpretive themes and opportunities for the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery that can guide CRC in raising the profile of the Cemetery, as well as foster a greater understanding of the site and the importance of the local and State heritage contained within its fabric.

#### **COMMENT:**

A copy of the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery CMP has been made available to Councillors under separate cover. The objective of the preparation of this CMP is to provide Council with an approach to identifying, directing and achieving long-term conservation and management outcomes for this significant heritage site.

The CMP contains ten conservation policies and actions that should be adopted as a basis for the ongoing management of the Cemetery in accord with best practice management of a State heritage-listed former cemetery (refer Attachment 1). The categories, under which specific actions are recommended, are:

- Policy 1: Heritage values management
- Policy 2: Legal Compliance
- Policy 3: Site Interpretation and presentation
- Policy 4: Maintenance
- Policy 5: Community Involvement
- Policy 6: Inter-agency cooperation
- Policy 7: Adaptation of features of low significance
- Policy 8: Internal paths
- Policy 9: Records
- Policy 10: Interpretation

In order to implement the recommended actions included in the Plan, additional funds will be required over the next five-years. In particular, priority actions include:

- Repairs of internal pathways to minimise safety issues.
- Increased maintenance commensurate with the site's values and community importance.
- Enhanced site interpretation and presentation.

Where possible, Council staff will identify and seek suitable funding opportunities as they arise to ensure the proposed tasks are implemented.

### **CONSIDERATIONS:**

#### Corporate and Operational Plans:

##### Community Plan:

*Protecting our Heritage – State and local heritage places are conserved and managed to provide a tangible connection to the community and landscapes of the past*

##### Corporate Plan:

Goal 3: *Delivering Integrated Planning - 3.4 Protect and manage the heritage and culture of the region.*

Goal 4: *Delivering Services and Infrastructure – 4.4 Deliver effective long-term maintenance and renewal of existing infrastructure and community assets*

##### Cultural Plan:

*Action Plan P30 - Develop Conservation Management Plans for prioritised heritage areas that Council Managers*

#### Statutory:

##### Queensland Heritage Act 1992:

Section 23 of the Queensland Heritage Act 1992 specifies the criteria of cultural heritage significance used to assess places for entry in the Queensland Heritage Register.

Conservation Management Plans are not a requirement of the legislation. However, they are seen as a good management tool and a key resource for use by the asset owner in carrying out maintenance.

#### Policy:

CRC Arts and Cultural Policy: Cultural Investment - commits to investing in cultural infrastructure and community experiences to grow the cultural capital of the region.

#### Financial and Risk:

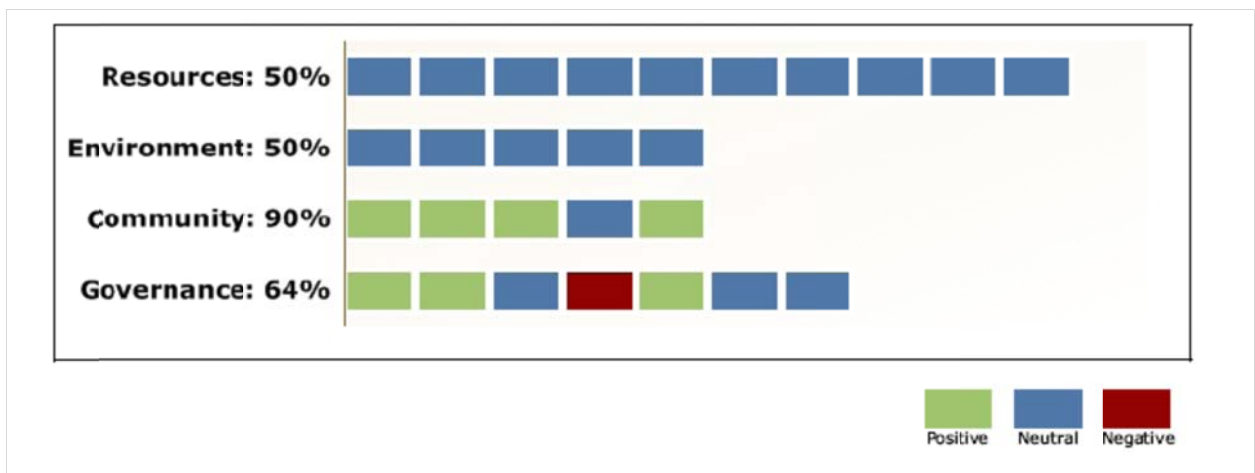
The development of the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery Conservation Management Plan was co-funded by the Queensland Government's Community Memorials Restoration 2011-2012 Program.

In order to implement the recommendations of the CMP additional funds will be required over the next five-years to address specific items included in the Plan, priority actions include:

- Effect essential repairs of internal pathways to minimise safety issues.
- Increased maintenance commensurate with the site's values and community importance.
- Enhanced site interpretation and presentation to provide a resource which balances original use with recognition of the roles played by those buried within the cemetery grounds.

Where possible, officers will identify and seek suitable funding opportunities as they arise to ensure the proposed tasks are implemented.

Sustainability:



This Sustainability Assessment has been completed in relation to the adoption and implementation of the new Conservation Management Plan for the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery.

Actions undertaken in relation to the implementation of the Conservation Management Plan will greatly improve the heritage value, security and amenity of the site. The implementation of the Conservation Management Plan will have minimal impact on the operating budget. However any rise will be offset by the increased improvement in site security and amenity.

**CONSULTATION:**

Cairns Family History Group  
 Cairns Historical Society  
 National Trust of Qld FNQ Branch  
 Cairns & District Chinese Association Inc.

**OPTIONS:**

That Council receives and notes the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery Conservation Management Plan and uses the document as a guiding tool for maintenance of the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery site.

**CONCLUSION:**

The CMP is a detailed report that will enable better management of the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery in a way that is sustainable and in line with heritage legislation.

Conservation Management Plans are not a requirement of the legislation. However, they are seen as a good management tool and a key resource for use by the asset owner in carrying out maintenance.

It is recommended that Council receives and notes the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery Conservation Management Plan and uses the document as a guiding tool for maintenance of the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery site

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery Conservation Management Plan extract – Conservation Policies and Actions

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**Attachment 1: McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery Conservation Plan extract**

**CAIRNS REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
**McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery**  
**Conservation Plan**



**Report prepared for  
Cairns Regional Council**

**July 2012**



**Maxim Consulting Services Pty Ltd**

## Conservation policies and actions

The following policies should be adopted as a basis for the ongoing management of the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery in accord with best practice management of a State heritage-listed, former cemetery:

### Policy 1 Heritage values management

**The significance of the place is formally recognized by the Cairns Regional Council as a foundation on which to maintain and develop the resource for the benefit of present and future generations while suitably venerating the lives of past residents.**

During the late twentieth century, the former Cairns City Council undertook wide-ranging improvements to the cemetery including the construction of a rotunda, identification and marking of additional graves (in conjunction with local community groups) and regular maintenance. It is recognized that those resources require ongoing maintenance and expansion consistent with the attributes of the site and emerging technologies.

#### Action

Cairns Regional Council formally recognises the historical significance of the Pioneer Cemetery and reflects this with an appropriate budget to ensure adequate maintenance and resources are committed for the site to be appropriately utilised.

### Policy 2 Legal compliance

**Works conducted within the heritage-listed area, including future developments, shall be undertaken with due regard for this Conservation Plan, the current state heritage legislation and the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter.**

These policies and ancillary actions are endorsed as the basis for site management in the foreseeable future. The greatest heritage significance is in the intactness and layout of the entire cemetery. In this regard, the extant spatial distribution of memorials and their ongoing care and maintenance are critically important.

#### Action

Cairns Regional Council endorses the conservation and interpretation policies, recommendations and practices identified within this document and will liaise with the Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection to have the proposals contained herein incorporated in a suitable exemption certificate

### Policy 3 Site interpretation and presentation

**The cemetery is important in interpreting and understanding human participation in the development of Cairns. Its values as an interpretive facility should be enhanced to provide a resource which balances original use with recognition of the roles played by those buried within the cemetery grounds.**

The cemetery is a place of contemplation and learning as well as being a memorial recognizing the contribution of many residents of early Cairns. The rotunda will be upgraded in accordance with this Conservation Management Plan and as funding permits to provide for core orientation and interpretation. Individual graves will be identified with additional personal information as opportunity arises.

**Action**

Cairns Regional Council staff will identify and seek suitable funding opportunities as they arise to ensure the proposed tasks are implemented.

**Policy 4 Maintenance**

**Cairns Regional Council recognizes the need for regular physical maintenance and will maintain the resource to its best endeavours.**

A review of the existing maintenance regime indicates a more frequent program is needed to ensure the prompt removal of litter and vegetation refuse, to tidy the individual graves and to identify and undertake minor repair work as required. The various park benches, for example, have an unkempt look about them and need cleaning, minor repairs and repainting and the rotunda paintwork is patchy.

**Action**

Cairns Regional Council will review current budget allocations and consider increased maintenance commensurate with the site's values and community importance.

**Policy 5 Community involvement**

**Cairns Regional Council recognizes the value of community participation and encourages the formation of revitalized Friends of the McLeod Street cemetery to support in its responsibilities.**

For over a decade the Friends committee undertook a lead role in the management, use and presentation of the cemetery. The committee should be revitalized and developed as a role model for other cemeteries in the region. Community involvement is highly desirable in assisting Council with management of assets of this type as was demonstrated in the 1990s, and the successful re-establishment of such a group could provide the catalyst for other communities to develop a 'hands on' involvement with other cemeteries.

Any such Committee should be guided and supported by Council but should not be seen to have a direct management role. Council should maintain its overriding responsibilities with the appointment of at least one employee and/or elected member on the Committee.

Discussions with Chinese community representatives has led to the suggestion that, given the high percentage of Chinese burials within McLeod Street, the Ching Ming Festival could be used to encourage wide community participation in annual maintenance work.

**Action**

Cairns Regional Council and staff will facilitate the re-formation of a Friends Committee. CRC should provide secretarial support and have representation on that committee (the representative may be an elected member of Council, an employee or a nominee appointed by Council or a combination). Membership should include representatives of the Cairns Historical Society; Cairns and District Family History Society; far North Queensland Branch of the National trust of Queensland, CADCAI and any other community group, or individual, whose contribution can be expected to enhance on-going care and use of the site.

Cairns Regional Council will actively pursue the suggestion that the Chinese Ching Ming Festival held in early April could be used as means of encouraging community participation in an annual clean up of the grounds.

### Policy 6 Inter-agency cooperation

**Council will continue to work constructively with the Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP) and the Queensland Heritage Council (QHC) to develop mutually acceptable outcomes.**

While Council has management responsibilities for the cemetery, activities are constrained by its listing on the Queensland Heritage Register. It is essential for Council to work closely with DEHP in any development of the place to ensure the highest standards of heritage place management are maintained. It is equally important that DEHP officers recognize the wider community values of the site and work cooperatively to ensure that every opportunity is taken to enhance those wide-ranging values. Prompt responses to management issues are essential for all parties.

#### Action

Cairns Regional Council and DEHP personnel shall work cooperatively to ensure heritage standards are maintained and that the associated goals are achieved with minimal bureaucratic hurdles.

### Policy 7 Adaptation of features of low significance

**Trees planted within the cemetery during the late twentieth century are unsuitable species. Their progressive replacement will be undertaken in a manner that continues to offer shade to visitors and does not damage the cultural integrity of the cemetery content and layout.**

The trees currently growing within the cemetery are unsuitable intrusions with no inherent heritage values. The *Melaleuca* and *Pinus spp* were planted in the 1970s and while they afford pleasant shade for visitors the trees are having adverse impacts on many of the identifiable graves. The 'almonds' have a safety problem as the hard seeds can be projected at high velocity by lawn mowers.

A comprehensive removal and replanting scheme should be developed by the Council's Arborist and Landscape Architect as a priority, preferably in close consultation with a suitably qualified heritage place manager. The program should be a progressive one aimed at gradual replacement of the mature trees. The complete and immediate removal and replanting of all trees should not be considered under any circumstances. Diseased and vulnerable trees should be the first to go. The pines currently growing in the 'alien section' – the northwest corner can, in general, be left for a later stage but needles and cones from them should be removed more frequently. They are unsightly even when swept into piles, and it has been suggested by some specialists they have a deleterious effect on the soil and on marble gravestones in particular.

#### Action

Cairns Regional Council should move promptly to ensure the removal of dead and damaging trees, bearing in mind that they are also safety hazards to visitors. An ongoing tree replacement program should be initiated and effected. CRC should ensure the program is well publicised to minimise public misunderstanding.

### Policy 8 Internal paths

**The existing internal paths are adaptations dating from the 1990s. In recognition of the recent perimeter fencing of the site, their negligible heritage values, and their uneven surfaces they will be progressively repaired or replaced. The narrow, diagonal, paved walkway will either be removed, re-grassed and returned to its original condition: lawn or, repaired to minimize safety concerns presently**

**evident. The rotunda access will be reconstructed and narrowed using an exposed aggregate concrete finish. The border plantings will be replaced by low plantings. The disability access to the rotunda will be repaired with more suitable materials.**

The diagonal path has a continuing practical value in facilitating walkers passing through the cemetery. As it has been decided to keep the side entrance (NW corner) open during daylight hours not only for maintenance vehicles but the public the path retains some functional values. The uneven nature of its surface makes it both a visual intrusion and a safety issue that needs immediate attention.

#### *Action*

Cairns Regional Council should either effect essential repairs or remove the diagonal paved path as a HIGH priority task due to safety concerns. The area should be re-grassed if the pavers are removed. The approach to the rotunda should be redesigned and the paved area replaced with an exposed aggregate concrete surface in the next two years. In the meantime, urgent attention should be taken to refit those paving blocks that are misaligned due to safety issues. The disability ramp should be repaired using more user friendly, visually pleasing, materials.

#### **Policy 9 Records**

**Since 1988 there has been substantial research undertaken in respect of burials at McLeod Street. Much of this is in printed form and some retained on CRC electronic archive systems. No consolidation has been undertaken, with the result that the information is disjointed and diverse. Biographical data is, for example, partially retained on a large format spreadsheet and available in more limited form on Council's website.**

**Grave records are similarly diverse. The original records from 1988 exist in hard copy as do separate later assessments of grave damage and repairs. They are also uncoordinated and not available on the web.**

A consolidated database should be developed that incorporates biographical data, grave descriptions and conservation actions taken. It should include capacity for ongoing additional data to be added.

#### *Action*

The vacation employment of a university student (history or computer science) should be considered. The aim should be to coordinate the material currently held in four archival boxes (see appendix) into a functional record capable of continuing benefit.

#### **Policy 10 Interpretation**

**The interpretation in the rotunda is useful but hard to follow and has the scope to be enhanced. Much of the information offered is dated, disjointed or irrelevant. A proposal to introduce QR coding to selected graves is under development.**

The development of 'on grave' QR coding should be encouraged as a supplementary information source but not as a stand-alone system. The devices must be considered as an opportunity to access additional data that cannot be made available using more conventional methods such as metal plaques.

#### *Action*

A comprehensive revision of the interpretation within the cemetery is needed. The interpretation within the rotunda should be linked closely with proposed interpretation within the cemetery itself.

## Conclusion

The McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery was developed as a major heritage site in the late twentieth century. The efforts made, during the 1990s, to develop it from a neglected, disused cemetery were largely as a result of the energies of the late Mayor Keith Goodwin and the Friends of the McLeod Street Pioneer Cemetery under the leadership of Mrs Marie Nemec.

For various reasons those efforts have dissipated in more recent times, and although the cemetery itself continues to retain a significant role in the presentation of Cairns' history, it justifies refocussing. Improved security, enhanced maintenance and more meaningful interpretation are critical issues which have been discussed in this document and provide the opportunity to reignite interest in the site.

While the cemetery can never be a 'self sustaining heritage place' – few ever are – it can once again value add to the cultural heritage attributes of the city and region as a whole.