



CEMETERIES & CREMATORIA ASSOCIATION OF WA

Cemeteries Administration Workshop

Participant Workbook

16 April 2026

For Cemetery Operators & Managers

<https://ccawa.net>

Welcome

Welcome to the CCAWA Cemeteries Administration Workshop. This workbook is your personal record of learning for the day. It contains a summary of the key content from each session alongside space to capture your notes, questions, and reflections.

This workshop has been designed for both newer members building a solid foundation and experienced practitioners sharing practical insights with the group. There are no right or wrong answers — your experience matters.

Note: The Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA) can in places be ambiguous and open to interpretation. It is currently under review. Where questions arise, participants are encouraged to read the relevant sections directly and seek advice from CCAWA Board members.

Your Details

Name	Organisation	Role

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How to use this workbook

Each module opens with a **Key Content** summary drawn from the presentation — this is the core learning for that module. Discussion questions and writing spaces follow, along with a reflection prompt and space for your personal takeaways.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Identify the key legislative obligations governing cemetery operations in Western Australia
- Apply correct pre-burial checking and documentation procedures
- Explain the purpose, scope, and management of Grants of Right of Burial
- Describe requirements and risks associated with expired grants
- Implement sound records management practices including retention and digitisation
- Explain public access obligations and privacy considerations for cemetery records
- Apply correct licensing requirements for funeral directors and monumental masons
- Understand the legal requirements and importance of gazetting cemetery fees

Module 1 Welcome & Purpose of the Workshop

Key Messages

This workshop has been developed in direct response to the many enquiries CCAWA has received from members seeking clarification on cemetery-related issues and processes. The primary focus is to give members a clear and practical understanding of their obligations under the Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA).

What the workshop covers

- Burials — what is required
- Grants and burial rights
- Record keeping and documentation
- Licensing of funeral directors and monumental masons
- General administration including gazettal of fees and common forms

How to engage

- This session is designed for open discussion — your practical experience and examples are valuable to everyone in the room.
- CCAWA Board members are present not only to facilitate but as an ongoing point of reference for your organisation.
- A short online quiz will be used at various points to reinforce key points and prompt discussion. It is a learning tool, not a test.

Note: The Act is currently under review. Where you are unsure, read the relevant section directly and seek guidance from CCAWA.

1. What is your level of experience in cemeteries administration?

- New to role / new to cemeteries
- Some experience
- Several years' experience

2. What are you hoping to gain from today's workshop?

3. What cemetery-related questions or issues do you deal with most often in your role?

◆ **Reflection** *What is one thing you would like to be doing differently in your role after today?*

★ **My Key Takeaways from this Module**

Module 2 Legislation & Reference Documents

📄 Key Messages

Throughout this workshop we refer to three primary sources of law and guidance. Understanding which applies to your organisation is the foundation of sound cemetery administration.

Primary legislative references

- Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA) — the principal legislation governing cemetery operations in Western Australia
- State Records Act (WA) — governs how records must be created, kept, and disposed of

Organisational references

- Your Cemetery Local Laws — specific rules adopted by your local government or board
- Cemetery Policies and Procedures — your organisation's internal operating framework

When in doubt: read the Act directly. CCAWA Board members are also available as an ongoing point of reference for members.

1. Which of the following does your organisation currently rely on? (tick all that apply)

- Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA)
- State Records Act (WA)
- Cemetery Local Laws
- Cemetery Policies / Procedures
- Unsure

2. Where do you usually go for authoritative advice when you are unsure about a cemetery matter?

◆ **Reflection** Are there any legislative requirements you feel less confident about? What support or resources would help?

★ My Key Takeaways from this Module

Module 3 Burials — Accepting a Burial Request

Key Messages

When a request for burial is received, a cemetery authority has specific statutory obligations under the Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA). These obligations ensure burials are conducted lawfully, respectfully, and in accordance with approved cemetery management practices, documentation requirements, and public health considerations.


Key responsibilities when accepting a burial request

- Confirm burial rights — for a second burial, reserved, or pre-purchased grave, verify that the right of interment exists or can be lawfully granted
- Ensure a valid burial permit and all required documentation has been provided before burial proceeds
- Confirm the proposed burial location is appropriate, available, and complies with depth, spacing, and reuse requirements
- Ensure compliance with the Cemeteries Act 1986, and applicable local cemetery by-laws
- Record all burial details in the cemetery register — deceased's information, grave location, right of burial holder, and burial date
- Apply fees in accordance with the cemetery's approved and gazetted schedule
- Coordinate burial arrangements to ensure dignity, public health, safety, and compliance with the cemetery management plan

Information required from the funeral director

- Deceased's full legal name and date of death
- Burial permit / authority to bury
- Type of burial (coffin or ashes), requested date and time
- Cemetery, section, and grave details
- Name and contact details of the funeral director
- Any special requirements (religious, cultural, vault, extra depth, etc.)

Burials must not proceed if required information or documentation is incomplete.

 **Group Discussion** Share examples of unusual or challenging burial requests your organisation has encountered.

A Pre-Burial Checks

1. Before accepting a burial request, what key factors must be checked?

2. Has your organisation ever had to deny or delay a burial?

- Yes
- No

If yes, why?

B Information from Funeral Directors

3. What information must be provided by a funeral director before a burial can proceed?

4. What additional information is helpful for operational staff (e.g. grave digging team)?

5. Have you encountered any unusual or challenging burial requests? Describe briefly.

◆ **Reflection** *What processes could your organisation improve to make burial acceptance smoother and more consistent?*

★ **My Key Takeaways from this Module**

Module 4 Grant of Right of Burial

Key Messages

A Grant of Right of Burial is a legal certificate issued by a cemetery authority (the Board or local government) that gives a person the exclusive right to use a specific grave or plot in a cemetery. It does not mean the person owns the land — the land always remains the property of the cemetery authority. A grant is a lease-like right, not freehold ownership (Section 25).

Is issuing a grant a legal requirement?

Section 25(1) states that a Board may grant a right of burial. The word 'may' means the Act authorises — but does not mandate — cemetery authorities to issue grants. There is no offence provision for failing to issue one. However, the Act expects grants to be the formal mechanism for creating burial rights, and the discretion to not issue one should be exercised carefully.

Why a grant should always be issued

- Formally creates a legal right of burial and identifies the authorised holder of the grave
- Enables lawful placement and control of memorials
- Supports proper record-keeping and land management
- Protects the cemetery authority from legal and governance risk

Who can a grant be issued to?

- Any person, subject to the cemetery authority's approval — the legislation does not restrict eligibility
- The grant holder does not need to be the person who will be buried — the grant relates to control and decision-making over a grave, not occupancy
- A grant may be issued to a family member, friend, legal representative, or executor
- Grants can be issued before a death occurs (pre-need / pre-purchased) or at the time of need

Transfer of a grant

- Yes — a grant may be transferred with the approval of the cemetery authority
- Once approved, the cemetery register must be updated to reflect the new grant holder

Renewal of a grant (Section 25(2))

- Current grants can be renewed for a further 25 years at any time — there is no requirement to wait until near expiry
- Renewals are subject to applicable fees and compliance with cemetery conditions
- If a grant has already expired, a new grant must be purchased — renewal is not available for expired grants

 **Group Discussion** *What does your organisation do when a grant holder cannot be located for renewal?*

1. In your own words, what is a Grant of Right of Burial?

2. What is a grant not?

3. Is issuing a grant a legal requirement under the Cemeteries Act?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

4. Why should cemetery authorities issue grants? What risks arise if they don't?

Grant Management

5. Who can a Grant of Right of Burial be issued to?

6. Can a grant be transferred? If yes, what is required?

7. When can a grant be renewed?

◆ **Reflection** *How does your current grant management process compare with what was discussed today?*

★ My Key Takeaways from this Module

Module 5 Expired Grants

Key Messages

When a Grant of Right of Burial expires and is not renewed, the legal right associated with that grant comes to an end. Managing expired grants carefully is one of the most common sources of community and legal risk for cemetery authorities.

What happens when a grant expires?

- The former grant holder no longer has authority over the grave or plot
- Expired grants cannot be renewed or transferred — once expired, the grant permanently lapses and cannot be reinstated in its original form
- Control of the grave or plot reverts to the cemetery authority
- No further burials or interments are permitted unless a new Grant of Right of Burial is issued

What remains protected?

- Existing burials remain protected under the Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA) — the expiry of a grant does not affect the dignity, protection, or permanence of remains already interred
- Memorials and headstones may remain in place, subject to local laws, safety requirements, and maintenance standards

Reference: Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA), ss 27, 33, 40-42

Who can apply for a new grant on an expired grave?

- Any person may apply — the Act does not give former grant holders or family members an automatic or preferred right to purchase the expired grave
- Approval rests with the cemetery authority and is subject to cemetery policy, local laws, and whether re-use is permitted (depth, occupancy, heritage)
- Cemetery authorities should consider public perception risk when determining whether to sell a new grant to an unrelated party

Group Discussion *Has your organisation encountered issues with expired grants — e.g. families requesting monumental work? How was it handled?*

1. What happens in your cemetery when a grant expires?

2. Who may apply for a new grant over an expired grave?

3. What parts of a grave remain protected even after a grant expires?

4. What risks (legal, reputational, community perception) might arise when dealing with expired grants?

◆ **Reflection** *Does your organisation have a clear, documented process for managing expired grants? What gaps might exist?*

★ **My Key Takeaways from this Module**

Module 6 Records Management

Key Messages

Cemetery authorities are required by law to keep accurate and permanent records that show who is buried where and who holds legal burial rights. These records protect families, cultural heritage, community history, and the legal responsibilities of the cemetery authority.

Records that must be kept

- Burial registers and ashes interment records — official legal evidence that a burial has taken place, including name of deceased, date, and grave location
- Registers of Grant of Right of Burial — who holds the legal right to each grave, including transfers, renewals, and surrenders
- Cemetery plans and grave location maps — ensure every grave can be identified, even decades later or after redevelopment
- Exhumation and reinterment records — where remains are moved, approvals and new locations must be permanently retained
- Redevelopment registers — if any part of the cemetery is redeveloped, affected graves must be properly recorded


Why these records must be kept permanently

- Burial rights and community significance do not expire — families, descendants, historians, courts, and councils may need access long into the future
- Records provide the legal evidence of grants, demonstrate compliance, and protect the cemetery authority in disputes or legal review

Digitisation

- Cemetery records can be held digitally — they must be secure, accurate, and accessible long-term
- The original paper register must still be kept, even if a digital copy exists — paper registers are often the original legal record and may contain handwritten entries, annotations, or signatures with historical and evidential value
- Digitisation improves access but does not automatically replace the original record

Obligations under: Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA) and State Records Act (WA)

 **Group Discussion** *What advice would you give to an organisation just starting to digitise their records?*

A Required Records

1. What key cemetery records does your organisation currently keep?

2. How are your cemetery records stored?

- Paper only
- Digital only

- Combination of paper and digital

3. What challenges have you experienced with cemetery records?

B Retention & Digitisation

4. Which cemetery records must be kept permanently, and why?

5. If records are digitised, do original paper records still need to be kept? Why or why not?

6. What advice would you give to an organisation planning to digitise cemetery records?

◆ **Reflection** *What is the most significant records management risk facing your organisation right now?*

★ My Key Takeaways from this Module

Three horizontal lines for taking notes.

Module 7 Public Access to Cemetery Records

📄 Key Messages

Cemetery authorities have obligations to make certain records available to the public under the Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA), while also managing privacy considerations carefully.

Public access requirements

- Registers may be hard copy or electronic
• Public inspection must be provided at times and places set by the authority
• Access may be supervised to protect the integrity of records and individual privacy
• Staff may provide information verbally, limited to what is publicly recorded
• Copies or extracts may be provided — fees may apply

Grant holder disclosure — a frequently asked question

A Grant of Right of Burial register must be available for public inspection. The register may show the name of the grant holder if that information is recorded in the register. However, the Act does not require the grant holder's name to be included in the register, and organisations are not required to separately provide or confirm the grant holder's identity outside what appears in the register.

- The Act does not prescribe a fixed list of data fields that must appear in the register
• If the name is recorded in the register, a person inspecting the register may see it
• Organisations are not required to separately confirm the grant holder's identity beyond what is in the register

Each organisation should have a clear, documented policy on what it discloses and under what circumstances.

🗨️ Group Discussion What is your organisation's current approach to grant holder disclosure? How is it documented?

1. Which cemetery records must be available for public inspection?

Four horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 1.

2. What information should not be disclosed?

Two horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 2.

3. Does your organisation disclose the name of the grant holder?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

Explain your organisation's approach:

◆ **Reflection** *Are there any aspects of your current public access practices you would like to review or improve?*

★ My Key Takeaways from this Module

Module 8 Funeral Directors — Licensing

📄 Key Messages

Under the Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA), cemetery authorities have responsibility for controlling who may conduct funerals in their cemeteries. Licensing funeral directors is an important governance and safety tool.

Why issuing a licence is important

- Ensures funerals are conducted by authorised and accountable persons
- Confirms compliance with legislative and local law requirements
- Helps maintain safety, dignity, and orderly operations in cemeteries
- Protects the cemetery authority from legal and governance risk
- Identifies a named, responsible party for each funeral
- Enables the cemetery authority to enforce conditions and standards, including scheduling
- Provides a clear basis for investigation of complaints or incidents

Practical considerations

- If you manage multiple cemeteries, consider whether a single licence covers all cemeteries or whether separate licences are required for each
- Licence applications should capture: the director's full name and business details, applicable cemeteries, relevant qualifications or registrations, and agreement to the cemetery's conditions of operation

💬 **Group Discussion** *If you manage multiple cemeteries, how do you handle funeral director licensing across sites?*

1. Does your organisation require funeral directors to be licensed?

- Yes
- No

2. Why is issuing a licence to a funeral director important?

3. What key information should be included in a funeral director's licence application?

4. If you manage multiple cemeteries, how is licensing handled?

◆ **Reflection** *Are your funeral director licensing processes documented, consistent, and up to date across all cemeteries you manage?*

★ **My Key Takeaways from this Module**

Module 9 Monumental Masons & Memorials

Key Messages

Licensing monumental masons is required under the Cemeteries Act to help cemetery authorities control memorials and ensure all work is authorised and safe. It protects public safety, maintains the dignity and appearance of the cemetery, and gives the authority accountability and enforcement options if standards are not met.

Why licensing is essential

- Ensures monuments are installed by competent, insured contractors
- Manages safety risks during installation and maintenance
- Confirms compliance with design, size, and placement requirements
- Protects surrounding graves and infrastructure
- Without licensing, the organisation has limited ability to enforce standards or address unsafe practices

Application for monument installation

- The application process ensures the person requesting the monument is authorised to do so
- It allows the cemetery organisation to check that the monument design and installation will be safe and compliant
- Applications help protect the dignity, appearance, and orderly layout of the cemetery
- Applications also prevent disputes about location, size, or inscription wording

Minor works

Minor works are small changes to an existing monument that do not affect its structural strength or safety. Many organisations have specific policies for minor works on both current and expired grants — your local laws or by-laws should address this.

 **Group Discussion** *Do you allow non-licensed masons for any works? How do you manage the risk?*

1. Why should monumental masons be licensed?

2. What risks arise if monumental masons are not licensed?

3. Do you allow non-monumental masons to carry out monument installations?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

4. How do you ensure monument works are safe and compliant?

5. Have you ever had to reject a monument application? Why?

◆ **Reflection** *What is your confidence level in your current monumental mason licensing and compliance processes? What would strengthen them?*

★ **My Key Takeaways from this Module**

Module 10 Gazettal of Cemetery Fees

Key Messages

Cemetery authorities must gazette their fees in the Government Gazette to establish legal authority to charge them. This is a requirement under the Cemeteries Act 1986 (WA) and is a fundamental governance obligation — not simply an administrative step.


Why gazettal is important

- Confirms legal authority to charge fees — without gazettal, fees may not be legally enforceable
- Provides transparency and public notice of the fees your organisation charges
- Ensures fees are fair, consistent, and defensible if challenged
- Reduces complaints, disputes, and audit risk
- Demonstrates sound governance and compliance

What are the risks if fees are not gazetted?

- Fees collected may not have been legally charged — creating potential liability
- The organisation may face complaints, audit findings, or legal challenge
- Governance credibility with councils, boards, and the community may be affected

If your fees are not currently gazetted, this should be treated as a priority action item. Contact CCAWA for guidance on the gazettal process.

 **Group Discussion** *Show of hands: how many organisations here do not currently gazette their cemetery fees?*

1. Are your cemetery fees gazetted?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

2. Why is the gazettal of cemetery fees important?

3. What risks arise if fees are not gazetted?

◆ **Reflection** *When were your fees last reviewed and gazetted? Is a review overdue?*

★ **My Key Takeaways from this Module**

Thank you for your participation today.

Cemeteries & Crematoria Association of Western Australia