

21 October 2024

Official information request 8140014450  
(Please quote this in any correspondence)

James

By email: [fyi-request-27915-d3564aa0@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-27915-d3564aa0@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Tēnā koe James

---

**Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987**

**Re: Waikumete Cemetery damage**

Thank you for your email dated 05 August 2024, in which you requested information about Waikumete Cemetery. The specific details of your request and our response are below.

***As reported by media, Waikumete cemetery was impacted by cyclone Gabrielle last March. In particular the public mausoleum where bodies are interred was damaged and needed repairs.***

***Under the OIA please provide the following:***

***Please provide the date and details relating to the discovery of the damage to the mausoleum.***

*At the end of February 2023, a member of the public witnessed visible signs of leakage on the outside of the mausoleum building and alerted cemetery staff.*

*Please refer to the attached letter sent to impacted burial rights holders.*

***Please provide the dates Tipene Funeral services were contacted, if they were indeed contacted relating to this matter and the need for any deceased to disinterred.***

***Please provide these communications, with any identifying details of those interred removed.***

***Please provide any communications internal or otherwise regarding deceased being interred in a non-compliant manner with Waikumete cemetery between January 2023 and August 1st, 2024.***

*There is only a small volume of information held relating to the interment and disinterment's from the mausoleum at Waikumete cemetery.*

*Whilst there is correspondence between council and the effected families regarding the mausoleum repair works for the most part, verbal conversations took place throughout the process as council worked closely with the families to ensure their opinions were sought and disinterment and reinterment dates and times were mutually agreed upon. Verbal updates were provided to the families on the day.*

*Due to the operational nature of cemeteries the majority of information is passed verbally between cemetery staff: the internal correspondence includes information relating to the initial assessment of caskets which were disinterred, identification of potential issues including water damage, and the decision made to transfer the loved one to our Chapel of Faith (or at alternative location if the family so wished) that was being used to house occupants or communications with funeral directors to make any further assessment on behalf of council and families.*

*Tipene Funeral Service were made aware that some caskets had not been prepared appropriately at the time of original interment. Tipene was made aware of this non-compliance issue at a meeting with council on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Confirmation of non-compliant findings was sent, and council took steps to address the water damage and resolve non-compliant caskets working closely with affected families and funeral directors.*

*A contractor completed work including repairs, organising plaques and cleaning up the site in late July and then continued to monitor for any issues for a period of time.*

*While we have summarised aspects of these documents in this letter, we are withholding their full content. The information contained within the correspondence has a high level of strong, privacy interests, of both the relatives and of the deceased persons, as well as a high level of cultural sensitivity. It is also subject to an obligation of confidence between families and council and council and funeral directors. Therefore, the information requested has been withheld, pursuant to the following sections of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA);*

- section 7(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons*
- section 7(2)(c)(i) to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence and making that information available would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.*

*We have considered whether the withholding of this information is outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make that information available. We consider that the public interest does not outweigh the reasons that exist for withholding this information.*

***Please provide the dates (do not provide any personal information) of the disinterment's. that were required in order to undertake the repair work. Please provide the start and finish date of the repair work and when reinterments commenced.***

*Please refer to the below timeframe of events which took place in 2023 at the mausolea.*

<b>Bays 3 &amp; 4</b>		
February	End	Empty Mausolea vaults were open and checked for leak
March	Early	Begin discussion with families on top row (initial investigations)
March	Early	Ministry of Health informed of the need to disinter, sought their advice
March	Mid	Meeting with initial families in top row
March	Mid	First disinterment's undertaken
April	Early	Communications to wider Burial Rights Holder empty or used vaults
April	Early	More empty vaults opened
May	Early	Remaining disinterment's in Bays 3 & 4
May	Mid	Disinterment's of Bays 3 & 4 complete
<b>Bays 1 &amp; 2</b>		
July - August		Families were contacted individually by phone and offered a meeting
August	Early	Disinterment of Bays 1 & 2 commenced
September	Early	Disinterment of Bays 1 & 2 completed
November	Early	Reinterment of Bays 1 & 2 completed

Decisions relating to the information that is being released to you were made by **Taryn Crewe, General Manager - Parks and Community Facilities.**

You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you believe we have not responded appropriately to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you have any further queries, please contact me on 09 301 0101 quoting official information request number 8140014450.

Ngā mihi



Amanda Pillay  
 Privacy and Official Information Business Partner  
**Customer Experience and Digital Services**