Boroondara Cemetery

Celebrating Life

BOROONDARA CEMETERY TRUST

Strategic Plan 2026–2031



Background

Since 1859, Boroondara General Cemetery (Cemetery) has been providing burial and interment services to the Boroondara community. Although it has accommodated over 80,000 burials, it is much more than a cemetery.

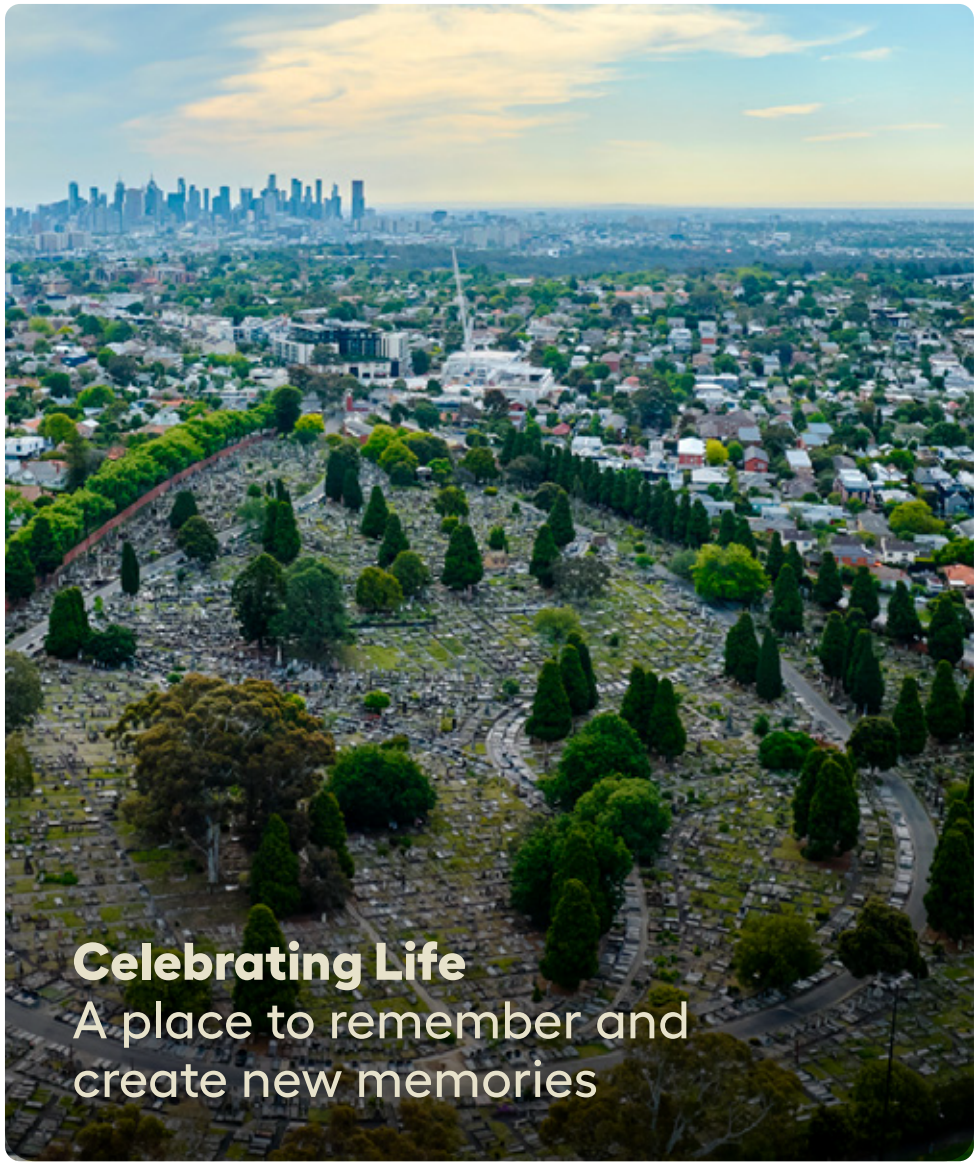
The Cemetery is part of the local community.

It is a place of reflection, a place of memorial, a place where families come together to remember, to reflect on and to celebrate the lives of those who have passed.

It is a meeting place, a place where community groups come together, a place where music is played, where stories are told and where education thrives.

The Cemetery is an example of a heritage Victorian era garden cemetery with plants and trees providing a canopy that supports horticulture and environmental diversity and sustainability.

It is a place of significance, a place of history, a place of beauty, a place of tranquility in an otherwise busy, complex and uncertain world.





2026–2031

Acknowledging that at some point in the future we will need to shift from being an active operating cemetery into an organisation focused on maintenance and preservation, this strategic plan is the next step in our journey.

As the Boroondara Cemetery Trust (Trust) plans for the Cemetery's future, it does so from a position of operational strength.

The recent development of the Cemetery Master Plan and ongoing implementation of the Vegetation Management Plan along with a series of operational improvements, as part of the implementation of the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, have elevated the Cemetery and the Trust's capability.

The 2026–2031 Strategic Plan seeks to leverage this foundation to grow revenue, diversify services, activate heritage assets and extend the Cemetery's positive impact – both within its grounds and local community as well as across the broader Victorian cemetery sector – today and into the future.

While we continue to fulfil our core purpose of memorialisation, we recognise the Cemetery's enduring value as an open, vegetated space and an important community asset – supporting recreation, education, and use as an event and community engagement space.

Purpose

Boroondara General Cemetery is a Class 'B' cemetery regulated by the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2005*. The objects of the Act are to ensure that:

- Human remains are treated with dignity and respect
- All Victorians have access to cemetery and crematoria services
- Cemetery trusts operate effectively and efficiently in accordance with this Act.

Under the Act, the functions of a Class B cemetery trust are:

(a) to properly and efficiently manage and maintain each public cemetery for which it is responsible

(b) to carry out any other function conferred on a Class B cemetery trust by or under the Act or any other Act

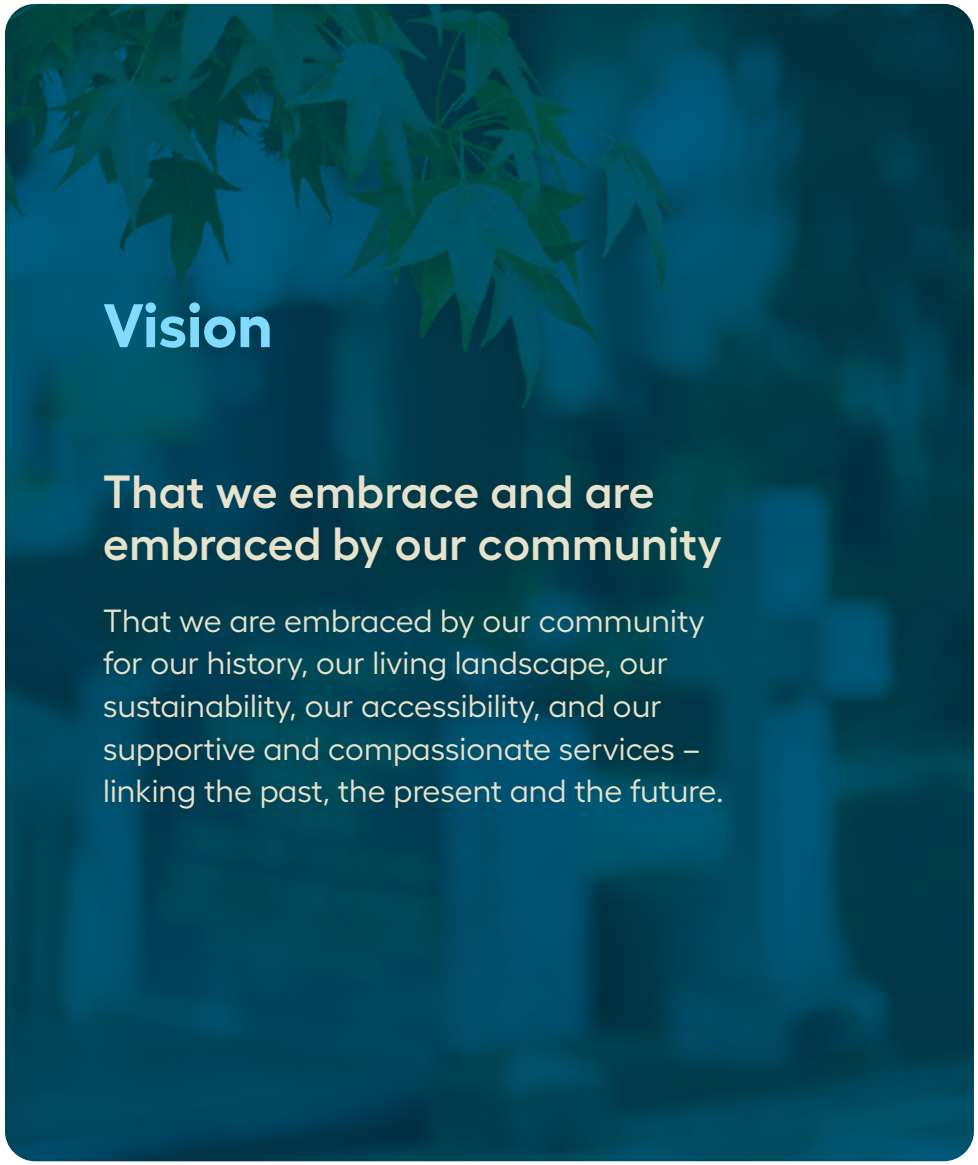
(c) to meet heritage obligations and community aspirations

A Class B cemetery trust must have regard to:

(a) its obligations in relation to funding of the perpetual maintenance of the public cemetery for which it is responsible

(b) the cultural and religious values of the community

(c) the heritage values (if any) of the public cemetery for which it is responsible



Strategic Intent

We aim to be Victoria's most progressive and effective Class B cemetery by:

- Providing dignified, affordable and accessible burial and memorialisation services to the communities of Melbourne's inner east
- Being stewards of and preserving our heritage, horticulture and history for the benefit of current and future generations
- Engaging actively with our community to facilitate connection, reflection, remembrance, education, participation and support
- Leading the Class B cemetery sector in Victoria through best practice sustainability, innovation and service delivery
- Acting in a fiscally responsible manner and strengthening our long-term financial sustainability



Values and Principles

Dignity & Compassion
We honour every life and support every family with care.

Community & Belonging
We serve our diverse and evolving community faithfully.

Stewardship
We preserve our history and our landscape and value our people.

Excellence & Innovation
We embrace contemporary practice and continuous improvement.

Sustainability & Responsibility
We act ethically, we are financially responsible and we are environmentally sustainable.

Strategic Pillars



Pillar 1

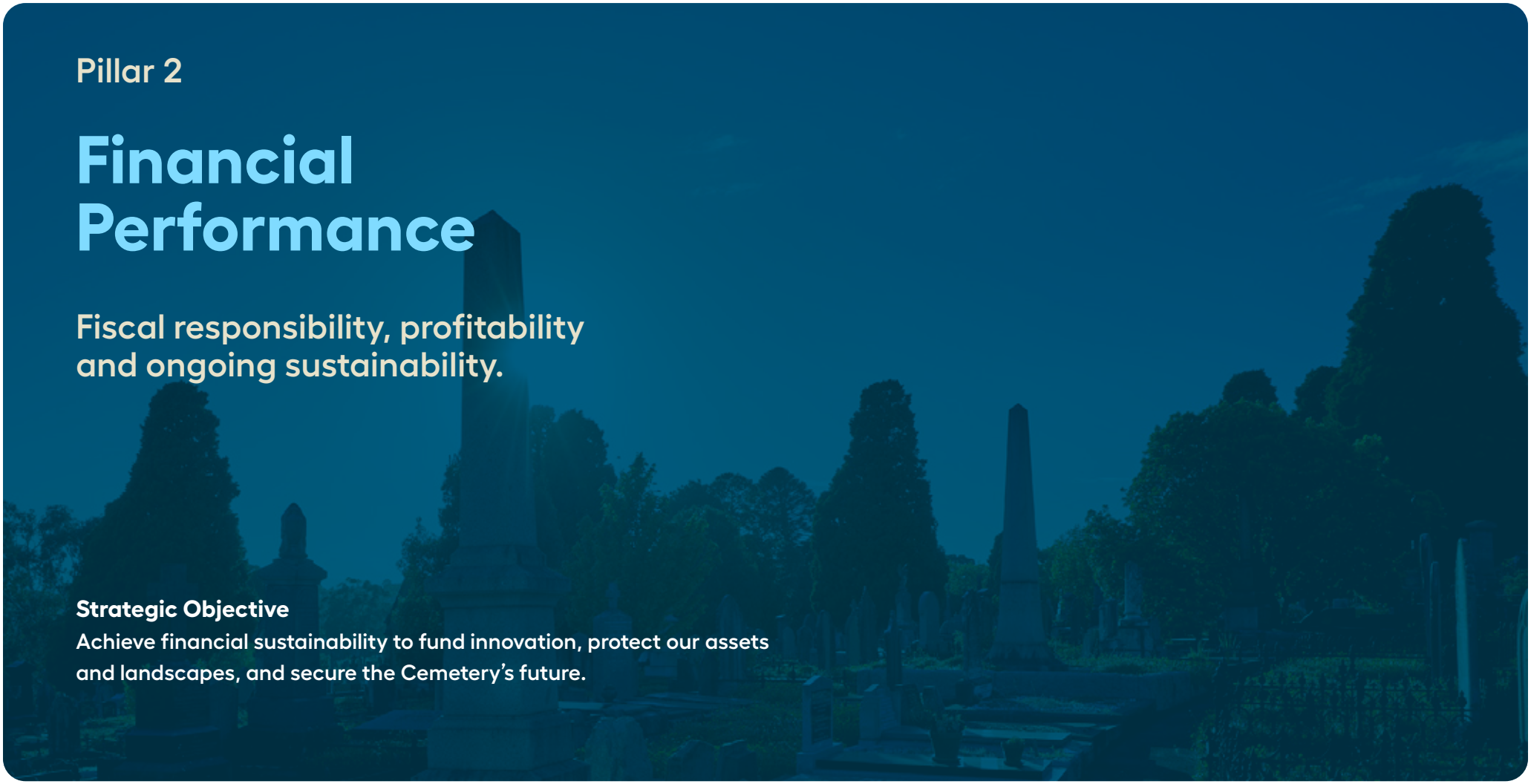
Future Focused Operational Excellence

Efficiency, effectiveness, innovation and leadership in cemetery operations.

Strategic Objective

Strengthen sector sustainability and influence through collaborative partnerships that leverage collective capability, reduce operating costs and advance shared priorities across Class B cemetery trusts.

Strategic Pillars



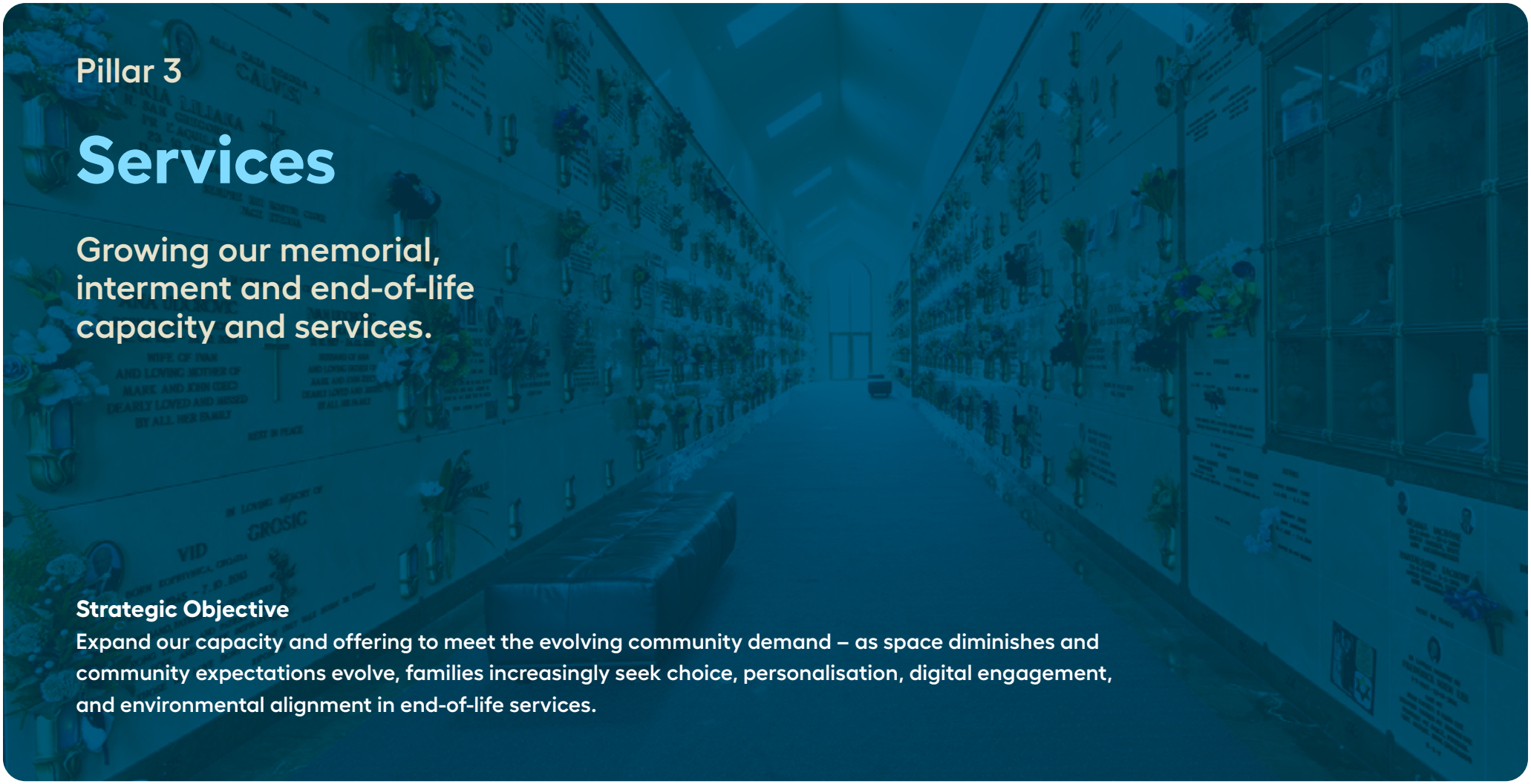
Pillar 2

Financial Performance

Fiscal responsibility, profitability and ongoing sustainability.

Strategic Objective
Achieve financial sustainability to fund innovation, protect our assets and landscapes, and secure the Cemetery's future.

Strategic Pillars



Pillar 3

Services

Growing our memorial, interment and end-of-life capacity and services.

Strategic Objective

Expand our capacity and offering to meet the evolving community demand – as space diminishes and community expectations evolve, families increasingly seek choice, personalisation, digital engagement, and environmental alignment in end-of-life services.

Strategic Pillars



Pillar 4

Stewardship and Community Engagement

Preserving, showcasing and sharing our history, heritage and living landscapes.

Strategic Objective

Transform our heritage into a living community asset – Boroondara Cemetery is one of Melbourne's most historically significant landscapes, home to the stories of the city's founders, immigrants, artists and citizens.

Strategic Pillars



Pillar 5

Governance and Workforce

Building organisational resilience and capacity through leadership, people and culture.

Strategic Objective

Exceptional leadership – A well-governed organisation with the right people in the right roles.

Strategic Context

Key Risks and Challenges

Risk is inherent in everything we choose to do and everything we choose not to do. As a public entity we have a responsibility to the community and to Government to manage risk within an appropriate risk appetite.

In developing this Strategic Plan, the Trust considered the key strategic risks and challenges likely to impact Boroondara Cemetery over the 2026–2031 period. The Plan embeds the response to each risk directly within its Strategic Pillars, objectives and initiatives. The table below summarises this alignment.

RISK/CHALLENGE	WHY IT MATTERS	HOW THE 2026–2031 STRATEGIC PLAN RESPONDS
Finite Burial Capacity	Available land for traditional burial is limited and diminishing over time, and this trend will only continue.	**Pillar 3** diversifies memorialisation options (high-density memorialisation, digital memorialisation, environmentally sensitive interment) to extend usable capacity, while **Pillar 4** progresses the long-term Master Plan transition toward a maintenance and preservation focus.
Revenue Concentration on Core Operations	Income remains heavily reliant on burial and interment fees, exposing the Trust to demand and pricing pressure as capacity tightens.	**Pillar 2** targets diversified income (events and tourism, fee-for-service to other trusts) to reduce reliance on core revenue, with an explicit target of an external income stream equal to at least 5% of core revenue.
Ageing Heritage and Horticultural Assets	The Cemetery's 170-year-old landscape, monuments and vegetation require ongoing investment and are exposed to climate variability, drought and storm events.	**Pillar 4** continues implementation of the Vegetation Management Plan and Master Plan, and builds a Biodiversity and Urban Ecology profile to guide stewardship of heritage and living landscape assets.
Regulatory and Compliance Complexity	As a Class B cemetery trust under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2005*, the Trust must meet evolving legal, heritage and community obligations, including emerging areas such as pet memorialisation legislation.	**Pillar 5** establishes a compliance framework, Trust-level compliance reporting and 'lead indicator' monitoring, targeting minimal to zero compliance breaches.
Workforce Attraction, Retention and Succession	Specialist cemetery operations require skilled staff in a competitive labour market, with succession and capability risk if this isn't actively managed.	**Pillar 5** commits to workforce planning, staff development and training, and an employee recognition and benefits program to build an enabled, capable and agile workforce.
Shifting Community Expectations	Families increasingly expect choice, personalisation, digital engagement and environmental alignment in end-of-life services, and cultural diversity within the community continues to grow.	**Pillar 3** expands memorialisation choice (green and natural burial, ecological memorials, pet memorialisation) and digital engagement, including virtual and augmented reality experiences.

Strategic Context

RISK/CHALLENGE	WHY IT MATTERS	HOW THE 2026–2031 STRATEGIC PLAN RESPONDS
Technology and Data Reliance	Operational efficiency, decision-making and customer experience increasingly depend on core systems (e.g. PlotBox) and the data they hold.	**Pillar 5** invests in a technology strategy, data management tools and customer experience metrics to lift efficiency, service quality and data integrity.
Governance Capacity as Activity Grows	New ventures such as the development of a Foundation and a Class B Consortium add strategic and governance complexity beyond current operations.	**Pillar 5** strengthens Trust performance through a more formal review and improvement framework, alongside strengthened governance and compliance reporting.
Sector-Wide Sustainability Pressures	Smaller Class B Cemetery Trusts across Victoria face shared cost, capability and sustainability pressures individually.	**Pillar 1** pursues sector collaboration – fee-for-service offerings and a Class B Consortium – to reduce costs and strengthen sector-wide resilience.
Long-Term Transition of the Trust's Role	At some point the Cemetery will shift from an active operating cemetery to an organisation focused primarily on maintenance and preservation, requiring a sustainable long-term funding and operating model.	This transition underpins the whole Plan: financial sustainability initiatives (**Pillar 2**) and heritage stewardship initiatives (**Pillar 4**) are designed to build the funding base and capability the Trust will need for this future.

Ongoing Monitoring

These strategic risks and challenges will be monitored on an ongoing basis through the Trust's governance and compliance reporting framework (**Pillar 5**), with progress against the Plan – and any emerging or changing risks – reported to the Trust and addressed as part of regular strategic plan reporting and review. Operating risks will be managed in accordance with our risk management framework.

Annexure

The following pages set out the proposed actions and initiatives designed to deliver each Strategic Pillar.

Some actions and initiatives require the development of a business case and implementation will be dependent upon the outcome of the business case, including assessing the Cemetery's capacity and capability to deliver, and will require the approval of the Trust.

Implementation of actions and initiatives will be regularly assessed against outcomes. Where desired outcomes are not being delivered or are unlikely to be delivered, a strategic review of those actions and initiatives will be undertaken.

Proposed Actions and Initiatives

PILLAR 1: FUTURE FOCUSED OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Efficiency, effectiveness, innovation and leadership in cemetery operations.

Strategic Objective: Strengthen sector sustainability and influence through collaborative partnerships that leverage collective capability, reduce operating costs and advance shared priorities across Class B cemetery trusts.

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
1.1	**Leverage our operational expertise**	• Develop fee-for-service offerings to other cemeteries and the broader sector • Investigate fee-for-service options and capacity to generate new revenue streams while strengthening sector relationships	1. Develop a business case considering back-office and administrative services and cemetery services, garden maintenance etc. to offer to other Class B cemetery trusts on a fee-for-service basis 2. Upon approval implement agreed activities
1.2	**Lead Class B Cemetery collaboration**	• Increase influence through visibility of our skills and experience across the Class B Cemetery sector • Join / establish a Class B Cemetery Consortium to aggregate purchasing power, reduce governance costs and advance shared sector interests • Collectively advocate for sector interests that enhance the Cemetery's performance and capacity • Leverage purchasing power opportunities to achieve price and supply benefits • Share policies and procedures to access best practice processes • Participate as presenters / leaders in industry events (ACCA) (CCAV) – publish articles in journals etc.	1. Develop proposal / framework / options for a Class B Consortium 2. Consult with CCAV to garner support / input to Consortium 3. Approach 3-4 Class B Cemeteries to establish a pilot for an initial Consortium and broaden membership to all (applicable) Class B Cemeteries once established 4. Formalise / map policies and procedures across key current Class B Cemetery relationships 5. Directly pursue greater relationships

Proposed Actions and Initiatives

PILLAR 2: FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Fiscal responsibility, profitability and ongoing sustainability.

Strategic Objective: Achieve financial sustainability to fund innovation, protect our assets and landscapes, and secure the Cemetery's future.

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
2.1	**Build long-term financial sustainability**	• Build operational reserves and diversify revenue streams • Optimise revenue from core operations • Develop income streams from activities beyond core cemetery operations to reduce revenue concentration risk • Apply disciplined cost management ensuring transparent, accountable resource allocation aligned to strategic priorities	1. Review and refine pricing annually 2. Develop a pre-need sales strategy to maximise yield from existing capacity 3. Identify business opportunities beyond core operations that establish sustainable income streams 4. Develop business case / recommendation for Trust and implement as agreed 5. Establish targets and benchmarks across expense categories as part of annual budget setting process 6. Develop reporting framework against targets

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
2.2	**Enable community giving and philanthropic support**	• Establish deductible contribution status and build philanthropic partnerships and benevolent initiatives • Establish a Cemetery Foundation to attract community support and obtain DGR status to unlock bequests, donations, grants – and establish a program of annual / event linked giving • Establish a volunteer program to attract and manage volunteers	1. Develop business case for establishing a Foundation 2. If approved, establish Foundation and obtain all regulatory requirements 3. Develop and implement a Foundation support strategy to engage with our community and attract Foundation funds 4. Complete and implement volunteer engagement strategy 5. Build organisational capacity to measure, engage with and manage volunteers to maximise experience and value 6. Establish communications strategy to promote volunteering opportunities to our community
2.3	**Generate new revenue streams**	• Activate our heritage assets and physical environment to generate new revenue streams • Design and deliver an ongoing commercially sustainable events and heritage tourism program that draws visitors, generates revenue and elevates the Cemetery's public profile • Develop an annual program of destination and experience-based events within the Cemetery's grounds	1. Formalise and establish a 'tour' based program across heritage assets, horticultural assets etc. 1. Identify appropriate 'Public Events' and establish a calendar of activity aligned to key public event dates (Christmas, Easter, Winter Solstice, Mother's Day) 2. Develop marketing and communications strategy to promote events to community

Proposed Actions and Initiatives

PILLAR 3: SERVICES

Growing our memorial, interment and end-of-life capacity and services.

Strategic Objective: Expand our capacity and offering to meet the evolving community demand – As space diminishes and community expectations evolve, families increasingly seek choice, personalisation, digital engagement, and environmental alignment in end-of-life services.

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
3.1	**Diversify our memorialisation offerings**	• Meet contemporary demand for choice, personalisation and environmental alignment in our memorialisation offerings to create greater capacity and sustainability • Launch a Pre-Need Planning Program: proactively market and sell burial rights and memorial plans ahead of need, building forward revenue and supporting families to plan with confidence • Investigate cultural, green and natural burial options • Introduce Living and Ecological Memorials: offer meaningful memorial options that contribute directly to the Cemetery's landscape and biodiversity outcomes • Develop memorialisation options to introduce high-density memorialisation to extend capacity and maximise use of limited ground space • Curate and offer a range of contemporary memorial objects and material products, giving families more ways to personalise and express remembrance	1. Develop and implement a structured pre-need sales and marketing campaign 2. Assess feasibility, regulatory requirements and community demand for environmentally sensitive interment alternatives 3. Develop recommendation for Trust review, consideration and endorsement 4. Implement projects and infrastructure development identified in the Master Plan in line with the agreed implementation schedule 5. Conduct an industry review and consultation to identify a range of memorial objects and products appropriate for Boroondara Cemetery 6. Develop and implement a sales strategy for the newly developed product lines

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
3.2	**Technology-led community engagement**	• Use leading edge digital transformation to tell the Cemetery's stories and deepen family engagement with their loved ones • Introduce Virtual and Augmented Reality Experiences to enable families anywhere in the world to engage remotely with graves, memorials and the Cemetery's heritage • Expand / promote digital mapping and immersive technology to share our history online • Consider digital memorialisation as an alternative to physical interment	1. Research and engage with industry experts to review the available technology 2. Develop a digital engagement framework / strategy 3. Implement agreed (approved) strategy in line with framework
3.3	**Embrace and support a broader element of family**	• Introduce pet memorialisation products and services to meet growing community demand and open a new, distinct revenue stream • Develop a dedicated range of pet memorialisation products and services	1. Develop a policy and framework for pet memorialisation in accordance with legal requirements (once legislated) 2. Conduct an industry review and consultation to identify a range of pet memorialisation options appropriate for Boroondara Cemetery 3. Develop and implement a sales strategy for the newly developed pet memorialisation product lines
3.4	**Capture opportunities to support interment with new services**	• Develop on-site memorial and ceremonial ancillary services • Create the infrastructure (Master Plan), spaces and service capacity to enable families to hold meaningful ceremonies and commemorative events within our grounds – cultural diversity accommodation	1. Implement projects and infrastructure development identified in the Master Plan in line with the agreed implementation schedule

Proposed Actions and Initiatives

PILLAR 4: STEWARDSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Preserving, showcasing and sharing our history, heritage and living landscapes.

Strategic Objective: Transform our heritage into a living community asset – Boroondara Cemetery is one of Melbourne's most historically significant landscapes, home to the stories of the city's founders, immigrants, artists and citizens.

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
4.1	**Greater engagement with our community**	• Leverage the Cemetery's 170-year history to engage with our community • Create a compelling Heritage Interpretation Program that makes the Cemetery's history accessible, engaging and discoverable to all visitors • Digitise our history and heritage for future generations	1. Develop a Heritage Plan for mapping the Cemetery's history 2. Align the Heritage Plan with the Master Plan 3. Develop a business case, plan and process to digitise the Cemetery's history 4. Establish and implement a digital access and engagement strategy
4.2	**Activate our horticultural landscape**	• Position the Cemetery's curated grounds as a distinct public destination for nature, wellbeing and horticultural appreciation • Build our Biodiversity and Urban Ecology profile • Establish the Cemetery as a recognised urban green corridor and a significant ecological resource within Melbourne's inner east	1. Using the Master Plan as a guide, develop a Biodiversity and Urban Ecology profile for the Cemetery (what we have and where it is) 2. Develop a business case and plan for positioning the Cemetery as a recognised urban green corridor 3. Integrate the plan with the Master Plan and develop a program of events and activities to showcase the Cemetery grounds – wellbeing, appreciation, accessibility

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
4.3	**Leverage the Cemetery as a living classroom and research environment**	• Build Education and Research Partnerships to promote engagement with the Cemetery • Invite schools, universities and TAFE Colleges to use the Cemetery as a living classroom for hands-on student experience • Engage with researchers to enhance and validate the stories we have to tell • Lead community education programs – rose pruning / landscaping etc.	1. Develop a business case for establishing Education and Research partnerships 2. Identify key educational institutions with which the Cemetery could establish education and research partnerships 3. Develop a program of community education activities such as rose pruning, striking cuttings, propagation, tree maintenance and promote these as education participation activities to the community
4.4	**Enhance accessibility**	• Develop people-centred accessible spaces to enable more engagement with more people • Develop welcoming, functional and accessible destinations within the Cemetery that support community activity and draw visitors beyond core funeral services (signage, lighting, security) • Implement 'stay longer' places / facilities in line with Master Plan	1. Develop a priority and capital works program for the implementation of the Master Plan by 2026 2. Communicate the program to the community via website and other communications

Proposed Actions and Initiatives

PILLAR 5: GOVERNANCE AND WORKFORCE

Building organisational resilience and capacity through leadership, people and culture.

Strategic Objective: Exceptional leadership – A well-governed organisation with the right people in the right roles.

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
5.1	**An enabled, capable and agile 21st century workforce**	• Build resilience and capacity in our staff resources as an employer of choice • Attract, develop and retain skilled staff who can deliver contemporary, high-quality cemetery services with confidence and care	1. Map future workforce requirements and overlay with current workforce structure to identify opportunities for improvement 2. Establish staff development and training program to upskill staff for modern service delivery 3. Develop an employee acknowledgement and benefits program 4. Research, establish and lead efficiency benchmarking across Class B Cemetery sector
5.2	**Governance and compliance excellence**	• Invest in a culture to drive legal and regulatory compliance • Uphold the highest standards of governance, accountability and legislative compliance across all aspects of Trust operations	1. Develop a compliance framework as part of the management of risk 2. Develop and implement compliance reporting to the Trust 3. Establish key compliance 'lead' indicator reporting internally across the organisation – supported with regular training – internal audit framework 4. Establish a framework for addressing 'lead' indicator issues – including root cause 5. Establish processes to regularly review and assess organisational culture – including alignment with values and principles 6. Implement a more formal Board performance and improvement framework – (360-degree review, peer review, training sessions)

ITEM	GOAL	INTENT	INITIATIVES / OUTCOME
5.3	**Operational excellence and continuous improvement**	• Invest in technology to drive operational efficiency, improve decision-making and enhance service delivery • Invest in data management tools to analyse and assess data to identify opportunities for business performance improvement • Maximise the value of PlotBox – ensure full utilisation of the platform's capabilities to streamline operations, improve data quality and customer experience through optimisation of systems and processes	1. Map the 'customer' engagement journey to better understand the different pathways and identify opportunities and efficiencies 2. Develop and implement a technology strategy to drive operational efficiency and enhance service delivery – incorporating initiatives under all Strategic Pillars 3. Establish performance metrics to act as a benchmark for assessing improvement options 4. Establish customer experience metrics and assess customer satisfaction and engagement
5.4	**We are recognised for our environmental leadership**	• Develop best practice environmental sustainability in our practices and operations • Embed sustainability practices across all operations where possible • Be a leading green cemetery thought leader in Class B Cemeteries	1. Develop an environmental sustainability strategy 2. Upon approval, implement strategy and establish reporting metrics against key environmental and sustainability performance benchmarks

Boroondara Cemetery

Celebrating Life

boroondaracemetery.com.au