

PLAQUES AND MEMORIALS POLICY

Report Author: Executive Officer Recreation & Sport
Responsible Officer: Director Built Environment & Infrastructure
Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

Public infrastructure and open space play a significant role in the social and cultural heritage of the Yarra Ranges. The significance these hold for residents and visitors results in many requests for the placement of commemorative plaques and memorials every year.

While Council understands the desire to commemorate individuals in a tangible way in spaces that connect people to their memory, too many plaques and memorials in our open space risks diluting the very essence that draws us to these natural landscapes.

Therefore, as we consider new applications for memorials, we must carefully consider the balance between the desire to commemorate events or individuals and the intended purpose and on-going enjoyment of the unique natural environment of the Yarra Ranges and uncluttered public space.

As a result, the draft Plaques and Memorials Policy has been developed to help guide decision making where requests for plaques and memorials are received by Council.

Council officers are now seeking consideration by Council to approve and adopt the Plaques and Memorials Policy.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorses the Plaques and Memorials Policy.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

There are no related Council decisions relevant to this item.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

This Draft Plaques and Memorials Policy aims to reach a balance between maintaining the aesthetic and emotive qualities of our public infrastructure and open space, and community expectations around the use of public space and assets to remember and reflect.

The policy aims to:

- Provide direction for decisions made in relation to new plaques or memorials to be sited on or in Council owned or managed public infrastructure and open space.
- Set guidelines and community expectations around appropriate commemoration of people or events that have significantly contributed to the social or environmental history of the Yarra Ranges.
- Provide clarity for family members and friends who enquire about plaques and memorials in our parks, reserves and streets in commemoration of loved ones.
- Offer appropriate memorial options for infrastructure and open spaces, such as trees or street / park furniture.
- Maintain a balance between the intended purpose, environmental values and aesthetic and emotive quality of our public infrastructure and open space.
- Recognise that memorial plaques in public spaces should be for the commemoration of significant events or remembrance of people of enduring significance.

The Key Criteria of the Policy are:

Consideration for plaques and memorials will be limited to the following:

- *an individual or association that has contributed significantly to the cultural, political, environmental or social aspects of the development of the Yarra Ranges for a minimum of 25 years or have been recognised for a significant achievement or event.*
- *an individual or association strongly linked to the Yarra Ranges municipality and its history.*
- *an individual or association that has made an enduring contribution over and above what might be reasonably expected through paid employment or voluntary contribution.*
- *consideration of other awards the individual may have received. e.g., Australia Day Honours.*

- *a significant anniversary of an event unique to the history and development of the township or location.*
- *historical or other information relevant to the proposed site/location of the plaque or memorial.*

Any application must demonstrate broad community awareness and support for the individual or association.

Applications for public memorials will generally not be considered within two years following the death of a person to allow for the development of historical perspective and for consideration of the criteria for significance.

Proposed sites for plaques or memorials should meet the requirements of Council planning documents and regulations.

Memorials commemorating the death of pets and animals are not permitted on public infrastructure or open space.

Key Issues

The key reasons for the Policy:

- There is currently no policy, process or governance regulating decision making in response to requests for plaques, memorials and scattering of cremation ashes on public infrastructure or open space with the Yarra Ranges.
- Provides guidelines for commemoration of significant individuals and their connection to place.

Next Steps

The next steps are:

- Once endorsed, Council officers will create a Plaques & Memorials Panel (including representatives of Governance, Parks Trees & Trails and a senior officer, as appointed by the CEO) to assess applications.
- Council officers will create an application form to be available on the public website.

Options considered

Option 1 - To have no policy to guide officers when responding to requests.

Option 2 - Continue using this draft Policy to make operational decisions.

Option 3 - Endorse the Policy as drafted to provide clear guidelines and expectations for community and officers.

Recommended option and justification

That Council support the policy as drafted to be endorsed. This will provide clear guidelines for community and officers in assessment of applications for installation of plaques or memorials and scattering of cremation ashes.

The Policy acknowledges the cost of ongoing maintenance that may occur and provides a clear understanding of how those costs may be apportioned to the applicant.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

There are no costs involved in endorsement or use of the Policy as drafted.

The Policy allows for costs of installation and ongoing maintenance to be apportioned to the applicant, as decided.

The policy allows for Council staff to assess ongoing viability of a memorial, and clearly outlines the process that would be taken should maintenance no longer be viable.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

- Connected and Healthy Communities
- Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places
- High Performing Organisation

RELEVANT LAW

Not applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

There are economic implications involved in endorsement or use of the policy as drafted, as the policy allows for costs of installation and ongoing maintenance to be apportioned to the applicant, as decided.

Limiting the number of memorials, along with the ability to apportion costs to the applicant supports the economic sustainability of Council.

Social Implications

The limitation of memorials on Council infrastructure and within our open space network will support community use of these spaces, contributing to social sustainability.

Environmental Implications

Environmental sustainability may be supported through the planting of memorial trees.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Given the largely operational requirements of this policy, an “Inform” level of community Engagement is proposed.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Feedback has been sought from Governance, Recreation & Sport, Infrastructure, Design & Place, Parks, Trees & Trails and Customer & Communications.

Guidance for the drafting of the policy has been taken from similar policies across the state.

The policy aligns with Parks, Trees & Trails’ continuous improvement model.

The policy supports improved processes for assessment of applications, and increased transparency in decision making.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk of community dissatisfaction with the policy (however responses provided to real life requests to date have been well received).

Risk of not having the policy may result in a lack of transparency and equity across decision making.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Draft Plaques and Memorials Policy 2024