

Rookwood addresses critical burial shortage for Jewish and Muslim Communities

Tuesday 1 May, 2018: Rabbi Yehoram Ulman consecrated a newly allocated section at Rookwood Cemetery on Tuesday, which will ensure the Jewish community can continue burying loved ones at Rookwood for the next eight to ten years. This follows the 2013 allocation by the former Department of Primary Industries, of 6,700 burial spaces at Rookwood to the Jewish and Muslim faiths. While this was a good short-term solution, the Muslim community has used half of their allocated space and are again facing a critical shortage. Through extensive community engagement Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Trust (RGCRT) was instrumental in negotiating with the Jewish Board of Deputies and the Lebanese Muslim Association to develop a solution that meets the needs of these faiths. As a result of this initiative, the Jewish community transferred their portion of the previously allocated space to the Muslim community, whilst a new portion of land was granted to the Jewish community. For religious and cultural reasons, within both the Jewish and Muslim communities, burial is the only option and there are very specific requirements they must adhere to. For the first time in Rookwood's history, these two communities have had the opportunity to work together to create two distinct interment grounds that reflect their end-of-life values. The new land allocation includes 1,792 allotments, consisting of monumental (54.3%) and lawn (45.7%) burial spaces.

George Simpson, CEO of RGCRT confirmed, "We are delighted to have been included in this collaboration with two of our prominent community groups. At current usage rates, these new arrangements will provide both the Jewish and Muslim communities with eight to ten years of burial space for their families. "A number of our communities are facing a chronic shortage of available burial space. RGCRT is committed to ensuring all of our communities have access to suitable land at Rookwood for as long as possible. While RGCRT is seeking to find a new property to help address the shortage, we have been able to work with the Muslim and Jewish communities to assess their needs and reallocate space to suit their requirements." During his presentation at the event, Vic Alhadeff, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies CEO commented, "The allocation of Lot 27 will extend the life of Jewish burial at Rookwood by approximately four years. This means Jewish burial will cease at Rookwood within a decade. "And long before then, there will be no more Jewish burials at the other cemeteries in Metropolitan Sydney as the availability of land for Jewish burials is fast running out. "Lot 27 and the reallocation of half of Lot 10 provide the NSW Government with an important - but temporary - breathing space in which to find, acquire and allocate sufficient land to establish a major multi-faith cemetery - in effect, a second Rookwood. "We have been in active consultation with both the previous and the current NSW governments to try to achieve this vital goal - one which will benefit all faith communities of New South Wales, but in particular those such as the Jewish and Muslim communities which require permanent burial capabilities," continued Mr Alhadeff. "The measure of a society is ultimately how it treats its most vulnerable. There is surely no sector that is ultimately more exposed, more vulnerable, more reliant on others to advocate for them than those who have passed on. "It is to achieve this vital imperative - to accord those who have passed on the respect and honour and dignity that they and their loved ones deserve - that we respectfully call on the state government to do everything within its power to address this pressing issue with the urgency it justifies, with the urgency it warrants, with the urgency it demands," stated Mr Alhadeff. The consecration was attended by the Honourable Paul Toole, Minister for Lands, Forestry and Racing, and dignitaries from the Jewish and Muslim communities, and Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Trust. Media enquiries: images and release can be downloaded here [Roberta Marcroft](#) and [Kim Viney](#), Write Away Communication + Events Ph: 02 9978 1400, roberta@writeaway.com.au, kim_viney@writeaway.com.au

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