Proposed Commemorative Policy Review

Summary of submissions and officers' response

Absolutely Positively Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

Introduction

The Council proposes to review and update the Commemorative Policy to be more strategically aligned, relevant, flexible and effective in guiding the management of commemorative in public places.

The following changes are proposed:

- Clarifying the purpose, objectives, and scope of the policy
- Removing ash scattering and placenta interment in public places from the policy to be assessed and approved under the Cemeteries Management Plan 2021
- Developing guiding principles for decision-making on commemorative requests from the public (e.g. a request to place a plaque)
- Establishing an internal panel to review complex memorial requests.

Public consultation was undertaken from 14 September to 13 October 2023 through the Council's Let's Talk page. A Statement of Proposal, along with specific survey questions, were published on the Let's Talk page for the consultation.

One-to-one consultation with our Tākai Here partners was conducted, specifically the Chairs of Taranaki Whānui and Te Atiawa. An invitation was also extended to Ngāti Toa, but they declined.

Number of submissions received

We received five submissions on the Review, with four submissions from individuals and one submission made on behalf of an organisation. No submitters requested to make oral submission to Councillors.

Submissions received on specific survey questions

Q1-Do you support or oppose the proposed policy objective 'to provide clear guidance for the Council to make decisions in relation to commemorative requests in public places'?

Five submitters answered the question.

- Four submitters strongly support the proposed changes.
- One submitter somewhat supports the proposed changes.

Three submitters provided comments to the follow-up request 'Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose the proposed policy objective'. They consider refreshing guidelines is usually helpful because it will clarify the process.

Q2-Do you support or oppose removing 'management of requests for ash scattering and interring' as a policy objective?

Five submitters answered the question, among them four submitters strongly support, and one submitter is neutral about the proposal.

Three submitters provided comments to the follow-up request 'Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose removing the objective to manage requests for scattering and interring ashes from the Policy'.

- Two submitters submitted that the removal provides clarity as scattering and interring ashes will be dealt with in a more appropriate place by more qualified Cemetery Team under the Cemeteries Management Plan 2021.
- One submitter submitted that they have no strong feelings about this proposal as they can understand the desire for or against it from different groups.

Q3-Do you support or oppose the following proposed policy principles to guide decision-making?

For 'Public places are for the public', four submitters strongly support, and one submitter somewhat supports this principle.

For 'Connection to Wellington city', two submitters strongly support, and three submitters are neutral to this principle.

For 'Community wellbeing', two submitters strongly support, two submitters somewhat support, and one submitter is neutral to this principle.

For 'Mana whenua representation', two submitters strongly support, one submitter is neutral, one submitter somewhat opposes, and one submitter strongly opposes this principle.

Two submitters provided comments on the follow-up request 'Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose these guiding principles'.

- One submitter questioned why mana whenua seemed to have a greater say than other cultures. They submitted that real care was needed to the community with proper safeguards.
- One submitter supported the principles as they provided for clarity.

Q4-Do you support the establishment of an internal panel to review complex and significant memorial requests?

Three submitters strongly support, one submitter is neutral, and one submitter somewhat opposes the proposal.

Two submitters provided comments on the follow-up request 'Please let us know a bit more about why you support/oppose this proposal'.

- One submitter submitted that a qualified panel rather than an internal panel is needed.
- One submitter considered that the proposal makes good sense from a process perspective.

Please provide any further comments you have on the Statement of Proposal.

Two submitters provided further comments.

- One submitter was unhappy with the proposal to restrict commemorative tree planting for the coronation in the botanical gardens and stated that communities have rights to express themselves.
- One submitter was questioning why some people are so determined on building commemorative chairs and suggested to decline these requests and force them to think more creatively than 'chair and plaque'.

Tākai Here partners' feedback

One-to-one consultation with our Tākai Here partners was undertaken. They are generally supportive of the proposed changes. They agree that ash scattering and other interring of human remains should be carried out on private land or appropriate designated areas.

They recommend that new memorials should be of high level of significance, both culturally and societally and that the decision-making should align with the Council's threshold for managing public land, and with the priorities set-out in Tākai Here Partnership Agreement and Tūpiki Ora Māori Wellbeing Strategy.

They consider that commemorating private events should not undermine mana whenua values and should align with the principles in the Tākai Here agreement, particularly the cultural governance principle - Recognise that the policies, practices, roles, and responsibilities developed under this agreement will reflect the tikanga and values of Iwi.

For the internal Panel, they consider that the Council could draw qualified mana whenua representatives from existing bodies, such as any proposed naming committee or public arts panels rather than necessarily establishing a new panel. This recognises that increasingly these public space decisions are requiring joint input and alignment.

Officers' response to the submissions

Officers have considered all the submissions and provide the following responses:

- The policy will be amended to more closely align with the Council's relevant strategies, including the Tūpiki Ora Māori Wellbeing Strategy and the Te Whai Oranga Pōneke 2023.
- The Council honours the Tākai Here agreement, under which we have acknowledged that our policy and decisions will reflect the tikanga and values of Iwi partners.
- The proposed draft policy will be amended to reflect public submissions and feedback from our Tākai Here partners.