

**8 July 2022**

## **Calls to increase Work and Income Funeral Grant after cemetery price increases**

The Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand is calling on Government to urgently increase the Work and Income Funeral Grant after the release of 1 July council burial and cremation costs.

A sample of 17 council sites shows the average burial cost is now over \$4,000 with significant jumps happening in Tauranga, Hastings, Nelson, and the Far North over the last two years.

Chief Executive, Gillian Boyes says this takes the nationwide average cost of a very modest funeral with a burial to around \$8,400 against the Work and Income Funeral Grant which currently sits at \$2280.70.

“This matters because Māori and Pacific families are disproportionately represented amongst those applying for the grant, and it’s these families for whom burial remains the preferred funeral option.

“Our funeral directors have significant concerns about the wellbeing impact of them not being able to farewell their loved ones in a culturally appropriate way.”

The Association raised the issue of the inequity of the current Funeral Grant amount prior to the 2022 Budget but only recently received a response from the Minister.

“We were told the grant amount would be considered as part of the welfare overhaul. But progress on that to date has been glacial. With costs that funeral directors can’t control going up like this, we can’t wait” says Ms Boyes.

The Association has suggested a more equitable amount would be \$6,300, close to the Funeral Grant allowable under ACC.

“This is not a handout going to all New Zealanders. It is designed for a small group of the most vulnerable who are already struggling with significant post-Covid cost-of-living increases.

“Our funeral directors have to sit in front of these grieving families and tell them they probably can’t have the funeral they want. It’s deeply unfair on both families and on the funeral directors.

“Fixing this problem is not a big fiscal ask but can make an enormous difference to individual families,” says Ms Boyes.

### 1 July 2020 vs 1 July 2022 burial costs

Region	1 July 2020 Total for burials	1 July 2022 Total for burials	% Increase
Whangarei	3,868	3,868	0%
Hamilton City Council	4,425	4,440	0%
North Shore Memorial Park	5,504	5,600	2%
Manukau Memorial Gardens	5,504	5,600	2%
Waikumete	5,504	5,600	2%
Christchurch	2,865	2,925	2%
Taupo	1,125	1,150	2%
Palmerston North	3,024	3,100	3%
Waikato District Council	4,514	4,696	4%
Dunedin	4,026	4,270	6%
New Plymouth	6,092	6,552	8%
Napier	3,095	3,397	10%
Invercargill	2,303	2,570	12%
Onetangi Cemetery Waiheke Island	3,471	3,900	12%
Far North District Council	1,693	2,075	23%
Hastings	3,648	4,690	27%
Nelson	2,605	3,570	37%
Tauranga	3,152	4,673	48%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>3,690</b>	<b>4,038</b>	<b>9%</b>

### Notes to table

Costs are taken from published council cemetery rates. Costs include burial plot, interment, and compulsory maintenance costs. In councils where multiple plot costs are published, the costs shown represent the more modest or common plot cost. This means in places like Waikumete and North Shore Memorial current plot costs of up to \$8,400 are not represented in the table.

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The Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand represents funeral directing companies that undertake the majority of funerals in New Zealand. They are a group of caring professionals who are committed to ensuring that the families they serve receive high-quality funeral service. For more information, visit our website: [www.funeraldirectors.co.nz](http://www.funeraldirectors.co.nz)