

2 October 2023

Tēnā tātou katoa

This email marks the first group notification to all families impacted by the recent event at the Queenstown Cemetery. I believe I've been in touch with every one of you directly (or if I haven't yet I will be in touch shortly!), and I want to thank you all for your kindness and patience as we work through the response planning process.

First and foremost, you are invited to the Queenstown Cemetery blessing ceremony this upcoming **Thursday, 5 October at 8am on the open portion of the Queenstown Cemetery reserve**. As the families directly impacted, you are all most welcome to attend if you are able. For those families who cannot attend, we are still in the process of lining up someone to video record the ceremony, only for the purposes of sharing the recording with family members that cannot attend in person, and will hopefully be able to share that with you all following the blessing.

The blessing service will start at 8am. We will then host morning tea at the Whakatipu Senior Citizens Room following the service. See below the schedule for the morning:

- 8:00am – Local kaumātua Darren Rewi will open the blessing service (~10 min)
- 8:10am – Faith denominations to provide a blessing if they wish (~5 min each)
- 8:30am – Mayor Lewers to share a few words (time TBC)
- 8:40am – Local kaumatua Darren Rewi will close the blessing service (~10 min)
- 8:50am – Morning tea at the Whakatipu Senior Citizens Association, Level 1/10 Memorial Street, Queenstown

Please get in touch if you have any questions at all on the upcoming blessing ceremony.

Next, I want to provide you with a quick update regarding our plans for the clearance and restoration of the cemetery. Our general overview is as follows:

**Step 1:** Redirect water out of cemetery – we've succeeded in doing this and now the ground is finally drying a bit!

**Step 2:** Large debris removal – the current *tentative* plan is to place a crane along Brecon St and lift the large debris out. *No heavy machinery will be allowed entry into the cemetery.* We're still sorting the appropriate contractors and equipment for this operation so our timing is subject to availability.

**Step 3:** Remaining debris and silt excavation – we're in the process of lining up the teams to do this. Several individuals who have responded to emergency-impacted cemeteries elsewhere in NZ have offered advice and support, and we will be bringing in our monumental masons who have generously offered their support as well. Once I have a time frame attached to this activity I will send round another update.

**Step 4:** Detailed cleaning of the site – I'm hoping at this point that those of you who have so kindly offered to assist in the restoration process can join us to do the finer

cleaning of the site and headstones. We'll also be reviewing with turf specialists what can be done to best restore the grassed areas.

**Step 5:** Finishing restorations – this would entail the finishing repairs and resetting of any damaged or displaced grave features.

**Ongoing Step:** Risk Mitigation – I'm working with other teams in Council to see what can be done to mitigate future risks to the Queenstown Cemetery (and all our cemetery sites) following this event.

Again, as I move through this process and am able to share specific time frames, I'll send those around to you all.

Please know that you can reach out to me any time with questions or concerns, I'm responding to everyone directly.

Thank you all so very much for your continued patience and I hope to meet those of you who can attend, at the ceremony this Thursday.

Ngā mihi nui