

Life

honour
celebrate

SMCT NEWS UPDATE AUTUMN EDITION



The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP and guests attend traditional smoking ceremony at the Bunorong Memorial Park Community Day



Jane Grover, CEO SMCT, greets guest at Saint Padre Pio community event



Friendship and support at All Souls Day – Melbourne General Cemetery

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND CEO

In a speech given at the United Nations in 1958, Eleanor Roosevelt reflected on the progress that human rights had made in the preceding ten years. Her address produced one of her most quoted remarks; *'Where, after all, do human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person, the neighbourhood he lives in, the school or college she attends, the factory, farm or office where he works. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.'*

In a world where change is constant, it is small gestures of kindness that make us uniquely human. Care, compassion and community are the ordinary virtues that underpin a good society, and these are evident at the Centre for Care & Wellbeing (CCW). The CCW philosophy is underpinned by our Five Freedoms, which state you have the freedom to;

1. Take your time;
2. Ask the questions you need to;
3. Question common practices;

4. Decide what is right;
5. Honour the life of your loved one in the way that you choose.

As a purposed organisation our mandate is to care for the dead, but as importantly, companion the living. The test of any purposed organisation is whether they make it possible for the community to behave in a caring, compassionate and inclusive way. To uphold ritual and preserve the ordinary virtues and traditions that our community relies on.

I would like to share a quote from a recent letter from a guest at the CCW that reinforced the importance of giving our community a safe space to enact simple virtues and our Five Freedoms;

'I was mesmerised with the beauty and serenity of the spaces, the wonderful activities available, but mostly the atmosphere of warmth, kindness and understanding. I have felt so nourished and strengthened here. If I was to capture the essence of being at the Centre this week, I would use the following 3 words: Presence, Healing, Connection. I've reflected a lot about what our precious human life is all

about and now it is crystal clear: we are here to have loving, uplifting, supportive and rich relationships with ourselves and others. Nothing else matters. The existence of the Centre for Care & Wellbeing perfectly aligns with that purpose and I for one, will be eternally grateful for its presence.'

As we move from the warmer weather into a cooler season, we look forward to continuing our focus on supporting the Victorian Community through constant listening. It's through your opinion and consultation that we can shape this organisation. From all of us at SMCT, thank you.

Jane Grover
SMCT
CEO



Sue Renkin
SMCT
Trust Chairman



ART LIVES AT SMCT

ELVIS AND MELBOURNE GENERAL CEMETERY INSPIRE ARTIST POLIXENI PAPAPETROU

Polixeni Papapetrou is a Melbourne-based photographic artist who has both artistic and personal links to Melbourne General Cemetery. We were privileged to gain an insight into Papapetrou's creative world when she spent some time discussing her connection to Elvis, why Melbourne General Cemetery has such a special significance, and how she captured a portrait of former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in just the right light, to create just the right moment.



Polixeni Papapetrou, *Three young men with floral tribute on the 14th anniversary of Elvis's death, Elvis Memorial, Melbourne General Cemetery, 1991, (Elvis Immortal 1987 – 2002)*

Q1. You have a connection with Melbourne General Cemetery through several of your works. 'Elvis Immortal' has documented the annual pilgrimage of Elvis fans to his memorial at the cemetery since 1985. Can you describe how this came about?

When I first began taking photographs in the mid-1980s I carried my camera wherever I went. At the time, I lived in North Carlton and regularly walked through the cemetery. On 16 August 1985, I was walking through the cemetery with my camera. I heard Elvis's music and being a big fan, in that I grew up with his music in the family home, I followed the music until I found the source. It was at the

memorial where I encountered a group of fans singing, sharing stories about Graceland and doing a show and tell of memorabilia. I was fascinated and took some pictures.

The following year, I heard Elvis music on the radio and I was reminded of the anniversary. I took my camera (and a tripod this time) to the cemetery and made better pictures. I became hooked and made this trip annually for the following 17 years until 2002 when I realised I had said all that could be said through these pictures.

Q2. You were commissioned by the Centre for Contemporary Photography to respond to Melbourne General Cemetery in an exhibition named; 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.' Your responding piece, 'I wove me a wreath,' transformed a large, aged arrangement of white silk flowers found at the cemetery, into something fresh and lifelike. What inspired you to experiment with light and backdrops to 'animate' the inanimate arrangement?

Death itself and describing death is bound up in symbolism and metaphor and I wanted to work within these boundaries. Walking around the cemetery I was struck by the number



Polixeni Papapetrou, *I wove me a wreath, Melbourne General Cemetery, 2015, (Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow 2015)*

of graves adorned by artificial flowers. I thought about this deeply and knew that the relatives of the deceased would probably have wanted to leave fresh flowers but didn't for a myriad of reasons.

I wanted to breathe life back into these artificial flowers as if I could breathe some life back into the departed. I am living with terminal illness and these ideas felt real and important to me. I will be buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery (and would not settle for any other resting place in Melbourne) so the cemetery itself will become a site of significance for my family.



Polixeni Papapetrou, *Malcolm Fraser, 2001, (Portraits of Australians 1997 – 2001)*

Q3. Your portrait of former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in his later years, leaning against his desk, is a striking addition to your 'Portrait of Australians' series. Can you describe how you managed to capture him in that moment?

Malcolm Fraser had won an award for a publication and I was commissioned by the State Library to photograph the recipients of the State Premier's Literary Awards. I didn't have a lot of time and was a bit shaky. I didn't feel like I was making much progress and I asked Mr Fraser if he was able to sit on his desk as this posture felt more accessible.

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NEW SCULPTURES NOW AT BUNURONG

ARTIST'S TRAIL WINDS ITS WAY TO BUNURONG MEMORIAL PARK

In early February this year, SMCT was excited to install two works from prominent Australian artists Greg Johns, *At the centre (There is nothing)* 2012 and Inge King, *Jabaroo* 1989 at Bunurong Memorial Park (BMP).

On loan from the collection of McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery, the sculptures perfectly complement SMCT's commitment to offer the community a variety of respectful ways to experience our multi-purpose community assets.

The qualities of both works quietly support the philosophy and purpose of BMP, an Indigenous Australian landscape which provides a space for sentimental reflection and metaphysical contemplation.

Represented by Australian Galleries, Melbourne and Sydney, both Johns and King offer a unique take on Australian themed sculpture that can only be appreciated in person.

We welcome our community to experience these works during their exhibit period at BMP.

Greg Johns

Greg Johns' work is synonymous with the material of Cor-ten steel. Over time, this weather-resistant steel develops a rich and velvety russet surface which appeals to the artist for its robustness and visual clues to the colours found in the Australian desert landscape.

Based on fractals, intricate patterns that infinitely repeat, *At the centre (There is nothing)* uses a continually changing pattern that exists within the circle, a universal symbol of unity and stillness.



Greg JOHNS *At the Centre (There is nothing)* 2012
Cor-ten steel
On loan from McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery

Inge King

Inge King was a powerful voice in industrial sculpture. In *Jabaroo* colours of black, white and red give definition to the work and add to its sense of energy. This work references the dance of the Jabiru – a dance that can only be performed by certain male members of the Aboriginal community.

The jabiru is a black-necked stork that 'dances' in pairs. King captures the elegant movement and form of this creature while referencing its cultural and spiritual significance for Indigenous Australians.



Inge KING *Jabaroo* 1989
Steel, painted
On loan from McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery

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At the time that I was taking this picture the natural light changed, entered the room and the portrait felt complete.

This is an extract of the article, 'Identifying Elvis (and a host of others): the work of Polixeni Papapetrou', first published on 2 October 2017 in Honouring Life. To read the full article please go to HonouringLife.smct.org.au

For all art enquiries and for further information on Papapetrou's works, exhibitions and career, please go to polixenipapapetrou.net



Above: *Portrait of Polixeni Papapetrou and Lexie*
© Robert Nelson

Right: Polixeni Papapetrou, *The Loners* 2009, (*Between Worlds* 2009 - 2012)



AUTUMN EDITION

SMCT HONoured TO NOW SERVE SORRENTO'S COMMUNITY

On 12 December 2017, Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT) was formally appointed to manage the Sorrento Cemetery (SC). Work has commenced for a transition period with the SC management team, with a full handover of operations planned for 1 March 2018. A key achievement has been the transfer of all SC records onto the SMCT database in readiness for handover.

Established circa 1886, SC has a rich and valuable heritage that is balanced with a commitment to meeting the current and future needs of the community. Notable interments include Federal Senator John Button, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, Vin Heffernan, actor Sophie Heathcote and Dame Zara Bate, the wife of former Prime Minister of Australia Harold Holt. Local lore also describes Dame Nellie Melba, a frequent visitor to Sorrento,

giving a concert performance at the cemetery to raise funds for a new fence!

SMCT thanks the previous Trust members for meeting the needs of their community and entrusting this historic cemetery to our management. We are proud to include SC as part of the nine cemeteries within our care. We are committed to ensuring that SC operations continue with the same compassion, empathy and dedication of purpose as always.



Sorrento Cemetery Aerial View

Sorrento Cemetery
78 Normanby Rd, Sorrento, VIC

General enquiries:
(03) 8523 1650

Email:
scc.enquiries@smct.org.au

Grounds open:
8.30am – 4.00pm 7 days

Office hours: 8.30am – 4.00pm
Monday to Friday

VICTORIA'S PROUD WAR HISTORY LIVES ON THROUGH SMCT BOOKLET

The Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust was delighted to recently publish the booklet; *Victorian War Heritage – The Rich War History of Springvale War Cemetery and Springvale Botanical Cemetery*. This informative booklet, full of touching stories with details of daring and poignant acts of bravery, will be made available to schools and community groups, free of charge.

The author, Dr Celestina Sagazio, Historian and Manager of Cultural Heritage SMCT said, "It was a fascinating process researching and writing about the rich war heritage of two significant burial grounds. Learning about their individual heroics, deepens our compassion and enhances our admiration for their courage, resilience and commitment to public duty."

Located within the grounds of Springvale Botanical Cemetery (SBC), the Springvale War Cemetery has 612 burials and is the second-largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery in Australia. This cemetery, together with the war graves located within SBC, comprise the most comprehensive war graves history in Victoria.

"Victorian citizens have been involved in wars since the 19th century, and this booklet commemorates the considerable service of many individuals who participated in major conflicts. We're so proud that Victorian War Heritage will make their stories known to a new generation of Victorians," said Jane Grover, CEO SMCT. Funding for Victorian War Heritage was



A salute to the Cross of Sacrifice, official unveiling 5 December 1948 – Springvale War Cemetery (Image: State Library Victoria)

received from the Veterans Council of the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet.

To download a copy of Victorian War Heritage, go to smct.org.au

CENTRE FOR CARE & WELLBEING - LOOKING BACK ON THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS



On 12 February 2018, the Centre for Care & Wellbeing (CCW) reached its first-year milestone. Since opening its doors more than 3,200 members of the community have been helped in their time of need.

SMCT CEO, Jane Grover said, "The importance of creating a safe space and guiding our families following a bereavement cannot be underestimated. Given that we take care of one third of Victorian burials and over 50 per cent of cremations, we feel it's our duty to support and nurture those who are impacted by

grief and loss. I'm pleased to say that over the last year, the Centre for Care & Wellbeing has offered many people the time and space to maintain the ceremony and ritual that is necessary on their personal journey through grief."

CCW Manager, Dianne Lee has seen the positive effect the sense of belonging and community has created for visitors to the Centre. "Within a fast-paced world, we've seen a real need for the social interaction and physical and emotional wellbeing sessions on offer, as well as educational sessions that provide strategies for dealing with

emotions. One of our key learnings is the importance of cultivating the formation of groups such as mother's, widow's or men's groups. Sharing stories and experiences gives an added level of support and helps them to progress, knowing they are not alone," said Dianne.

The Centre for Care & Wellbeing is based at Springvale Botanical Cemetery. Further information can be found at sbc.smct.org.au/CentreforCareandWellbeing/

Here's what guests had to say....

“ *“We have a refuge and a lifeline when we need it.”*
“It's a Help Centre for those of us picking up the fragments of lives changed forever by loss.”
“I felt completely safe, validated and most importantly, at home.” ”



WITNESS CREMATION VIEWING ROOMS AT BUNURONG MEMORIAL PARK

The witness cremation viewing room at the Bunurong Memorial Park (BMP) crematorium was recently recently refurbished. It now joins the viewing room at Springvale Botanical Cemetery in keeping with our commitment to provide beautiful spaces for our community to take the time they need to honour and celebrate life.

Should you choose witness cremation as part of your journey to saying goodbye, these facilities offer family and friends an intimate and peaceful space to uphold the tradition and ritual of saying a final farewell to your loved one.

Up to 12 family and friends can be comfortably accommodated within the



Witness Cremation Viewing Room - Bunurong Memorial Park

refreshed, softly-appointed décor of the viewing room at BMP. For enquiries

please call (03) 9788 9488 or email bmp@smct.org.au

OSTEO KEEPS SMCT STAFF STANDING TALL

SMCT values its staff and believes investing in their wellbeing at work is as important as investing in their career development. We talked to resident Osteopath, Dr Tom Peasley of R&R Corporate Health, about his role in helping staff to achieve their health goals at SMCT.

Q1. What were your initial thoughts about working at a cemetery?

I had no idea of the size of SMCT. When I heard there were over 300 staff with a large proportion of them performing manual work it all made sense. There has definitely been plenty of curiosity from friends and family about an osteopath's role at a cemetery. I'm sure I am still yet to hear the best puns.

Q2. How has your perception changed over time?

My role at SMCT started in July last year. I remember driving out to Cheltenham for the first time. It was around 6.30am, pitch black, and there was a thick fog covering the grounds. I found myself driving past memorials searching for reception. It was an eerie moment, but within 5 minutes

of finding the reception (and the sun coming up) I was met with some of the most genuine and committed people who continue to impress me with their motivation.

Q3. What has been the biggest surprise about SMCT?

I began to wonder about the people who work here. This conjured up all sorts of images and stereotypes, which I ignored as I really didn't know. The biggest surprise has been how eager all the staff have been to listen and take the advice I give seriously.

Q4. What is your favourite part of working at SMCT?

At SMCT everyone is working toward a common goal, and depending on their department, there may be a recurring problem affecting multiple people. I can identify these problems and provide solutions across SMCT, which is really fulfilling. I hope everyone who I treat gets as much out of it as I do.

Q6. Can you share your top three 'life hacks' for a strong back?

If you have back pain, I recommend a



Dr Tom Peasley - R&R Corporate Health Services

few tips to keep it stable and to avoid further aggravation.

A. Stretch your 'glutes' (the muscles in your bottom) - A seated glute stretch generally relieves most lower back pain. Sit down, place your right ankle on your left knee, gently lean forward with back straight until you feel a stretch, hold, release. Repeat on other side.

B. Squeeze your 'glutes'. When you're standing, spend a spare 10 seconds clenching your glutes, hold, relax and repeat.

C. Avoid bending - Always be aware of a bent back, when sitting forward at a desk, doing dishes, lifting children, and doing laundry etc. Losing focus on keeping your back straight and strong is a key player in back pain.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AT SMCT LOCATIONS

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION
Ching Ming Festival	Sunday 1 April 10.30am - 11.30am (Transfer of Merits at Di Zhang Wang Temple, Song He Yuan) 11.30am - 2.30pm (Banquet at Cafe Vita bookings essential on 03 8558 8278)	Springvale Botanical Cemetery
Mother's Day Remembrance Service	Thursday 10 May 7.00pm - 9.00pm For details and to register your interest go to: smct.org.au/events/2018/5	Bunurong Memorial Park
Free Rose Pruning Demonstrations	14 - 18 May Go to smct.org.au/events/2018/5 for details. Bookings essential.	Springvale Botanical Cemetery
Free Rose Pruning Demonstrations	21 - 25 May Go to smct.org.au/events/2018/5 for details. Bookings essential.	Bunurong Memorial Park