

CEMETERY 'RENEWAL'

I HAVE visited Fremantle cemetery since the early 1980s. Fresh cut flowers and prayers for my father Frank, buried here in 1971 just a few steps from the final resting place of AC/DC frontman Bon Scott who was buried in 1980, today one of Australia's most visited graves. No complaints about the noise or JD tributes left by fans everywhere. Only silent notes etched in the walkway leading to his commemorative plaque. A place of reflection and rich history reflecting the development of Fremantle since 1829. Opened in 1898, the cemetery covers nearly 50ha of land in Palmyra bounded by Leach Highway and Carrington Street and Sainsbury Road. More than 40,000 burials and 66,000 cremations have taken place at the historic burial site.

The first official burial took place July 2, 1899, the unfortunate entrant Beaconsfield resident George Davies, 51.

Fremantle cemetery contains war graves of 120 Australian defence force personnel who served in WW1 and 21 who served in WW2. On January 23, 1900, the trustees of the cemetery board were granted freehold title and a caretaker's lodge built from limestone in 1901 and which today serves as the admin office. The 10 members of the board held their first meeting on June 24, 1898, in the Fremantle Town Hall. On October 28, the Carrington Street site was declared a cemetery. Today, visitors can share the cemetery's history and stories of its 'residents' on the Heritage Trail near the caretaker's house. The walk takes about one and a half hours and signs have QR codes visitors can scan to access further information.

Carmelo Amalfi



*'The Angel that presided
o'er my birth
Said, 'Little creature,
form'd of Joy and Mirth,
'Go love without the help
of any Thing on Earth'
- William Blake 1757 - 1827*

HEADSTONES could be removed from graves at Fremantle cemetery within the next five to 10 years, according to documents sent to *StreetWise* by Saving Family Headstones at Karrakatta. The community group says the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board plans to expand its Karrakatta 'renewal' program to Fremantle as part of the its "medium-to-long term asset investment plan". "Renewal is not beautification," the group says. "Rather, it is the mass removal of headstones, grave surrounds and plot numbers to make way for new graves. "The headstones are either moved elsewhere in the cemetery, drilled into walls or entirely destroyed." The group says few people in WA are aware they do not 'own' a grave. All graves are subject to a 25-year lease known as a 'grant of right of burial'. Thousands of graves had their tenure cut on July 2, 2012 when all 50-year, 99-year and perpetual grants were extinguished. Headstones may be removed from graves without current grants.

Representative Shane Becu told *StreetWise* the MCB has not announced redevelopment plans for Fremantle: "However, we are informed by a reliable internal source that, as part of its 'medium-to-long term asset investment plan', the MCB will begin redeveloping existing burial areas at Fremantle within the next five to 10 years." The MCB told *StreetWise* it has no plans to expand its renewal program: "We can confirm Fremantle Cemetery has land available to meet the predicted demand for burials for the next 30 years." *StreetWise* sent MCB a copy of its own plans under 'Future asset network - Years 5-10', which states: "Renew burial land in Fremantle." No response from MCB, which posted the denial two hours after it was contacted by *StreetWise*. Families with information about the MCB plans can contact *StreetWise* at 0468608503 or melnet@westnet.com.au.