



Karrakatta cemetery is running out of space.

Graves to mirror Paris model

By JEN REWELL

Time is running out for people to comment on the controversial renewal of gravesites at Karrakatta cemetery.

The renewal process has seen the destruction and removal of hundreds of old headstones and caused grief to many families anxious about their loved ones' gravesites being disturbed.

The renewed areas are easy to spot in the cemetery – neat lines of cement and grass, and pristine rows of similar-sized headstones.

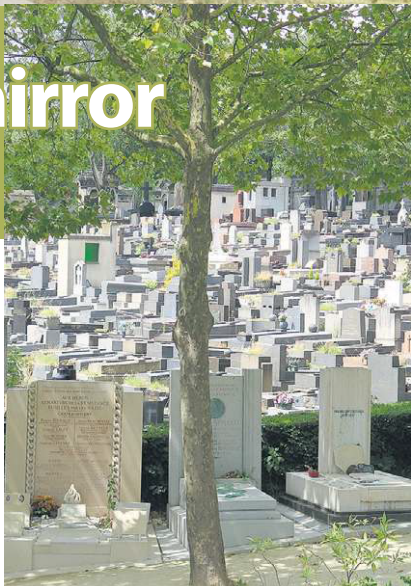
New interments are placed in between the remains of existing graves.

The POST has reported several times on people who have fought to have relatives' gravesites maintained in areas slated for renewal.

Local government minister David Michael said grave renewal was a sensitive issue, but it allowed authorities to maximise the use of land to ensure the sustainability of the cemetery.

Karrakatta has a standard 25-year lease on gravesites, which must be renewed by the family. There have been more than 201,000 burials at the 98ha cemetery since it opened in 1899.

Most cemeteries have a similar problem with space, including the



Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris has up to 1 million bodies and 70,000 grave sites. Photo: John Townsend

famous Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris which has 70,000 graves and more than a million bodies.

That cemetery opened in 1804 and houses the remains of notables such as Oscar Wilde, Frederic Chopin, Edith Piaf and Jim Morrison.

The 44ha Père Lachaise issues 30-year leases on gravesites.

If leases are not renewed by the family, the remains are moved, boxed, tagged and stored in the Aux Morts ossuary within the cemetery.

People are invited to comment through the department of local government, sport and cultural industries (www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au) on changes to the state's burial laws.