Memorials in Public Places Policy
Engagement Summary



Between Friday 24 October and Friday 5 December 2025, Central Coast Council sought feedback for the draft Memorials in Public Places Policy.

The draft policy aims to support community members who wish to honour the memory of a loved one. Council recognises the deep emotional significance that memorials in public places may serve for those processing grief.

Community members were invited to share feedback through the Your Voice Our Coast webpage, which featured an online submission form, and a FAQ section to address common queries. Submissions could also be sent via email or post. Council received a total of 12 submissions.

Key themes from the engagement were:

Themes from engagement	Number of submitters
Criticism of metal/artificial memorial trees	7
Support for memorial furniture (benches, seats, tables)	5
Preference for real trees over artificial	4
Policy ambiguity and clarity concerns	3
Opposition to public memorials	3
General support for the policy	3
Memorial location concerns	3
Environmental and sustainability concerns	2
Honouring previous applications	2
Cost and funding considerations	2
Lack of personalisation (numbers vs names)	2
Freedom of grieving expression	1

The key engagement outcomes and insights are further analysed below.

How you connected

A total of **12** online submissions were received

The draft policy was downloaded **265** times

Your Voice Our Coast **795** views

Facebook – **32,000** people were reached, generating **250** interactions

Email sent to **393** Your Voice Our Coast subscribers

Coast Connect print - Reach of **62,000+**

Engagement Results

Overall feedback reflected a wide range of views on how memorials should be managed in public spaces. A key concern raised by respondents related to the use of **metal or artificial memorial trees**, with many describing them as visually unappealing, unnatural, impersonal and poorly suited to their surroundings. This was reinforced by a strong **preference for living, natural trees** and more **environmentally sustainable options**, including suggestions for biodegradable materials. Some respondents also expressed concern about the **lack of personalisation** on metal memorial trees, particularly the use of numbers instead of names, which was felt to diminish the personal significance of memorials.

Many respondents supported more **functional memorial options**, such as benches, seats and picnic tables, and expressed **disappointment about the discontinuation of memorial furniture programs.** Views differed on **whether memorials should be located in public spaces** at all, with some suggesting grief and remembrance should remain private, or that memorials be limited to more appropriate locations such as cemeteries. Others emphasised the importance of allowing people the **freedom to grieve** and memorialise loved ones in their own way. Additional feedback raised questions about **appropriate memorial locations**, costs and fees, and whether community contributions could help fund memorial options.

While some respondents expressed general support for the intent of the draft policy, others raised concerns about unclear language, inconsistent criteria and policy ambiguity, noting that **greater clarity** would improve understanding and implementation. Requests were also made to ensure a **fair transition to the new policy**, including honouring applications submitted under previous arrangements.

Council Response

Theme	Theme summary	Council response
Metal or artificial memorial trees	Many respondents felt these structures were unattractive, impersonal and out of place in public spaces, with a clear preference expressed for living, natural trees instead.	The policy provides both options for the community. The metal trees provide an inscribed plaque, are made to last and provide a permanent memorial in a place that is linked and special to the person. We also note that the temporary leaves that are removed/replaced with the bronze inscribed leaves are recyclable which was an important part of the design. We carefully consider the site and ensure that it is not the centrepiece of the location. We also have a very specific set of guidelines for the locations. Additionally, the next round of trees we are working on an engagement plan to select the sites. This option was to replace people doing their own thing and creating maintenance or safety issues – this allows Council to manage memorials in a more structured way. The trees also provide an ability for anyone to have a plaque in their honour rather than having the strict criteria applied for seats etc. It provides more access to the community to memorialise their loved ones in a place that is meaningful to them.
Locations	Questions around public land as an appropriate setting for memorials or not	Council acknowledges that public open spaces are primarily intended for recreation, relaxation, environmental conservation and community use. The Policy recognises that unrestricted memorialisation can alter the character and purpose of these spaces over time. For this reason, Council has adopted a managed approach that balances opportunities for remembrance with

		the need to preserve public spaces for the broader community.
Lack of personalisation	Concern that metal memorial trees use numbers rather than names, which feels impersonal.	The numbers are on the temporary leaves and allows people to select a leaf and tell the Cemeteries team where they want their inscribed, bronze leaf to be installed (they can look onsite or we can send a plan). The customer then orders their plaque with whatever inscription they choose.
Memorial furniture	Disappointment about the discontinuation of memorial furniture programs.	Council acknowledges the community value of memorial furniture and the opportunity it provides to combine remembrance with a public benefit. However, Council must also consider long-term impacts including equity, asset management, maintenance obligations, demand for limited public space and the expectation of permanence. The Policy seeks to balance these considerations while continuing to provide appropriate opportunities for commemoration through alternative memorial options.
Community suggestions	• Improved clarity, simpler language and more consistent criteria • Using bio-degradable memorial items	Council supports the need for clear, simple and transparent policy requirements. Feedback has been considered to improve the readability of the Policy and provide more consistent criteria and assessment processes for memorial applications. Council acknowledges support for biodegradable memorial options. The Policy already provides for memorial tree planting in suitable locations, offering a sustainable form of commemoration that contributes to the landscape and community while avoiding many of the long-term asset management and public space impacts associated with permanent memorial structures.

What's next?

Council reviewed all feedback received during the public exhibition and amended the Policy where appropriate. The final Policy and results of the exhibition was presented to Council in May 2026 and was adopted.

Find out more and stay up to date at www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/memorials-and-roadside