



Comment on camping

THE Shire of Denmark is asking residents to comment about a move to create "long vehicle parking" spaces for caravans and camper vans.

Shire President Cr Ross Thornton said Council wanted to attract more holidaymakers.

"If we can encourage them to stop, even if it's for an hour or two hours, they'll get the benefit of Denmark, they may then actually stay here," he said.

"We've got lots of coffee places, the hardware stores, the grocery stores.

"They may decide it's such a tremendous place that they go and book into one of the caravan parks."

The Shire has opted not to comply with the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA), "RV Friendly Towns" program, which would require it to provide free 48-hour campsites with water and

sewerage.

Council minutes say this has been rejected because it would "undermine the viability" of existing caravan parks, and because Denmark was too good to "give away".

Instead, Council is choosing to adopt the Caravan Industry Association WA's, "Community Welcomes Recreational Vehicles" program.

Council minutes say this program involved creating visitor signage and designated long vehicle parking areas within walking distance of the Denmark CBD and the Council.

These are proposed to be at the entrance to Kwoorabup Park, North Road adjacent to the Fire Station, Annie Harrison Park, Berridge Park, the corner of Walker and Hollings Road, and Denmark Visitor Centre.

Council is inviting public comment on these locations for 30 days.



Larger bays look to lure tourists to town

EXTRA extended parking bays for recreational vehicles and caravans are now available in Mount Isa to better accommodate tourists.

Mount Isa City Council identified the need for the extra spaces because of the seasonal rise in caravan traffic.

Mayor Tony McGrady said the revised parking was limited to between 6am and 6pm, including weekends.

"There will be a maximum three-hour parking permitted. This will provide visitors with increased opportunity to shop in the CBD," Cr McGrady said.

"It is our hope these provisions will attract visitors to stay and spend time in our great city and not just stop off on the way

through."

The council surveyed the carpark behind the Civic Centre for a week and found spare capacity available perfect for caravan use, he said.

Cr Joyce McCulloch, who promotes regional tourism, said she welcomed the new parking options and hoped visitors would use these spots.

"This will enhance tourism in the city as this service has been noticeably absent in the past, and created a great deal of frustration for visitors and locals alike trying to find decent parking to spend time in the city," Cr McCulloch said.

Bringing the number of city

bays available to 47, the new caravan parking bays were marked out by work crews with signage to be added in coming days.

The bays are located at the Civic Centre, Mullen St near Outback at Isa, Camooweal St near Woolworths, Grace St at the Carwash, and Rodeo Drive near Kmart.



MORE SPACE: A Mount Isa City Council worker marks the extended parking bays.



EARTH PARK STEAMING AHEAD

The Grong Grong Earth Park has been somewhat of a work in progress since its initial concept was hatched back in 2013 but all signs show that it is steaming along nicely now with stage two of the project currently underway.

In May 2013 the Grong Grong Progress Association tabled a proposal to build a natural playscape and picnic grounds with RV parking for the use of the community and visitors to Grong Grong.

As a result of that an Earth Park Sub-Committee was formed to commence planning of the proposal.

The garden was underpinned by a small grant from the Live Well Narrandera project, as well as its own fundraising well in hand with support from local businesses and families in the district.

Now following a \$5,000 grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) small grants for small communities the Earth Park is using the money to purchase hardware and materials for the next stage of the park.

Earth Park committee secretary Gemma Meier recently told the Remote Indigenous Garden Network the whole aim of the project was to utilise disused land and create a hub that will celebrate local produce, people and community connections.

"The aim of the project is to re-occupy the site

with gardens, playscapes, picnic grounds, a natural amphitheatre, community pizza oven, and interpretive material about the district, its history and its produce," she said.

"The design of the broader area has been a collaborative process with small teams of families each working on a particular zone, and bringing their final designs to the committee.

"The Earth Park will draw visitors and families from the immediate districts and offer a change of pace for travellers.

As Gemma describes it, the Earth Park or wild playground is "a natural

playscape built almost entirely of reclaimed, recycled and natural materials - it is a place of wonder, fun, mystery, invention and food."

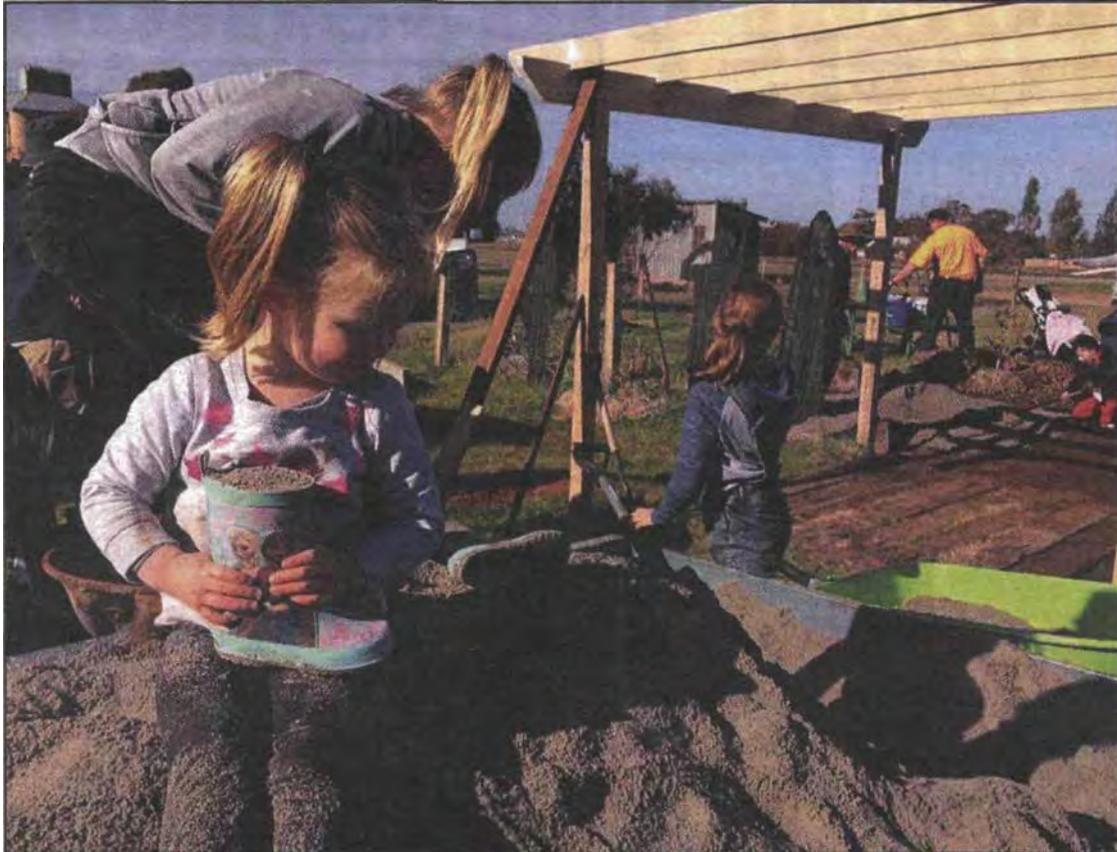
She said they expect to have the Tiny Tots Zone complete by summer.

The next stage to be started will be the community zone and the wild park for bigger kids 2-3 years.

Commenced during 2014 the Earth Garden was laid out according to a design provided by Karen Lenehan at Permaculture Design and planted with nut trees, stone fruits, citrus trees and vines, selected locally by Annie Sutcliffe-Young of The Shady Gum Nursery, Narrandera.

A local farmer and craftsman, Bruce Gawne, designed and built an insect hotel to install in the garden.

Not to be beaten by the green thumbs, local geeks then installed a geocache stash inside the insect hotel - marking Grong Grong on the global treasure-hunt map of GeoCaching.



Kanthe Hutchins does her bit of help with the construction of the Earth Park at Grong Grong.



Julia Walsh inspects the residents of the 'Bug Motel' at the Grong Grong Earth Park.



It is a case of many hands make light work at Grong Grong Earth Park where work is being undertaken to complete facility. Stage 2 is currently underway following a \$5,000 grant received recently. *Photos courtesy of the Grong Grong Earth Park Facebook page.*





Application will be re-submitted to council

RV park still undecided

An application for Echuca's first recreational vehicle park will be taken back to council, after it was withdrawn last week.

Echuca-Moama businessman Peter Hill's application for a 15-site park went before council on Tuesday night.

Council staff had recommended the application be refused, which was supported by councillors Paul Jarman, Ian Maddison, Emma Bradbury and Neil Pankhurst.

However, councillors Adrian Weston, John Zobec, Greg Toll and Carol Howell voted against the motion.

And with mayor Leigh Wilson not present for the item, having declared a conflict of interest, Cr Howell used her casting vote to knock the recommendation on the head.

But with no-one putting forward an alternate motion to the vote, council was left in limbo.

The following day Mr Hill withdrew his application and plans to address some of the concerns raised and then resubmit.

Mr Hill said it would be a great investment for Echuca.

"The RV and camping market continues to be the fastest growing segment of tourism in Australia with more than 65 000 members," he said.

Despite Mr Hill's speech last Tuesday night, several councillors called for the application to be rejected, including Cr Jarman.

"It requires a lot of things to be fulfilled and at this point I am not convinced they are being met," he said.

The application was reported to a council meeting on December 16 last year, however, the applicant requested the matter be deferred and sought to amend the application.

At the recent meeting, two speakers spoke against the proposal, while several sat in the public gallery.

Council received 17 objections to the development, which was also referred to the Catchment Management Authority, which objected on the grounds it was not appropriate on flood zone land and it would increase demand on community infrastructure and emergency services.

A consultation meeting between the applicant and objectors was held on October 1, where discussions surrounded the contract, floodway, noise, traffic, light, parking, tree removal and precedence.

But no resolution was reached.

Another meeting was held on April 22 after the application was amended, but the result was the same.

The RV park is proposed for 286 Anstruther St, Echuca, and would also include an amenities block featuring showers, toilets, washing and ironing facilities.

It would be developed in association with an RV park and would not include caravans or camping.

A pool-style transparent fence is proposed along the property's frontage, with a security gate along the driveway to control access.

A row of trees and a 1.2 m retaining wall are other features of the development.

Bookings would be made through a generic web page, which Echuca-Moama Tourism would manage. There would be no on-site management.

Once the amended application is lodged with council again, it will be put on public exhibition before being brought back to council.



One of the best RV friendly towns

IBELIEVE that Kingston is one of the best examples of an RV Friendly Town in SA.

Until recently there have been three locations along the seafront where travellers could stay free of cost.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Limited (CMCA) understand that the land development near Wyomi Beach may warrant a change of land use, which is why the recent restructure of parks was required.

There is no doubt that the recreational vehicle (RV) parking areas have brought numerous tourists to the region.

The main parking area is already a very popular destination and will continue to attract the travelling community due to its proximity to the jetty and shops.

Although the caravan park is calling foul about the changes being made, increased tourism in the region can be attributed to the council providing low cost parking for self-contained travellers who do not require many of the facilities that caravan parks provide.

Many people are unaware that there are an estimated 560,000 caravans, motorhomes etc registered in Australia, and of these units about 100,000 are on the road at any given time.

Many of these travellers have already headed north to follow the sun this year, and with more than 20,000 new caravans and motorhomes being built annually it is expected that this figure will double in a very short period of time.

Further research shows that there are three categories in the caravan and motorhome market; there are 34 per cent of travellers who will only stay at caravan parks, 50 per cent who will use some caravan parking and some low cost parking areas, and 16 per cent who will only look to stay in no cost or low cost camping spots.

The caravan park industry has a very bright future ahead as more families choose to hit the road.

Unfortunately, many parks have not catered for the self-contained travellers as well, who only need a flat

piece of ground to park, access to a sewer disposal site and potable water.

Most of the RV travellers touring around Australia do have their own home or base, which means that while they are travelling, they still have to pay their council rates somewhere.

The idea that these tourists don't pay council rates is certainly not correct.

Fortunately, the Kingston council has chosen to make changes that will continue to attract these travellers to the town and these visitors will continue to support all of the local businesses in the area, including the caravan park.

There is competition in the accommodation industry; there are bed and breakfasts, hotels, motels and caravan parks with on-site vans, cabins and parking sites for caravans.

RV parking areas are but another commodity that is rapidly appearing all over Australia.

The Kingston District Council's decision to remain an RV Friendly Town and adjust their agreement will ensure the town continues to benefit from attracting tourists to the area.

I am sure that all of the community has had some form of benefit due to having Kingston recognised as an RV Friendly Town.

KEVIN COLLINS, state representative for SA, Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Limited.



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