



EDITORIAL

THE public has been invited to comment on a Wattle Range Council proposal that is strongly opposed by the operators of Millicent's two caravan parks.

The proposal is to allow free camping for motorhomes and self-contained caravans at five sites, including Millicent, Tantanoola and Nangula.

The number of motorhomes and self-contained caravans is steadily rising as baby boomers become grey nomads.

With Canunda National Park on our doorstep, beaches nearby and Millicent boasting an award-winning museum, we have much to attract tourists of all ages.

Council has weighed up the pros and cons of the free camping proposal and is now seeking public input.

People need to think carefully when providing input because whichever way council goes with this policy, it will not be easy to reverse.

Dryzone input

WATTLE Range Council is using its public consultation policy to seek community views on draft policies regarding pets and dry zones.

The proposal to declare a permanent dry area at the Millicent Swimming Lake formalises an existing council by-law and would provide tougher penalties.

With the prospect of a \$1250 fine for being in possession of alcohol, this would surely deter late night revellers from using the lake as their drunken playground.

The other draft policy refers to public areas where dogs can be banned.

Even the most avid dog lover would concede that dogs and children's playgrounds are not a good mix.

Council is to be commended for making use of its public consultation policy on such matters.

The South Eastern Times also invites readers to share their views in letters to the editor.



Park owners unite

Millicent caravan site operators oppose council 'free camping' plan

THE owners of Millicent's two caravan parks are united in opposing a council proposal to permit free camping for motorhomes and self-contained caravans.

It is claimed the proposal will affect the livelihoods of Allan and Gloria Withers of the Hillview Caravan Park as well as Mark and Desi Dommenz of the Lakeside Caravan Park.

Between them, the two couples have operated the parks for almost 24 years and believe their businesses would suffer if the proposal was adopted.

If the proposal is endorsed after a period of public consultation, free camping will be allowed at five sites across the Wattle Range Council area, including Millicent, Nangula and Tantanoola.

According to Mr Withers, there is no such thing as "free camping".

He said there will be a cost to ratepayers due to rubbish removal and the maintenance of facilities, including toilets.

"We are not against 'free camping' but it should only be allowed in national parks and other out of the

way places," Mr Withers said.

"It should not be provided in towns where there are already caravan parks which provide secure accommodation.

"From our statistics, we have found that tourists will be happy to stay longer in a place after they have booked into a caravan park.

"They have armed themselves with all the information and their prized possession is also secure."

He quoted from an independent study, which found that for every dollar

spent in a caravan park a further \$1.38 goes into local economic activity.

Mr Dommenz is also concerned about the costs of policing the free camping.

"I asked some time ago for signs to be erected near the Millicent swimming lake to advise that camping is not permitted in that area, which is right alongside my caravan park," he said.

"However, I was told that there were not enough funds for the signs."

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PROTEST: Millicent caravan park owners Allan Withers and Mark Dommenz are strongly opposed to a proposal to allow free camping at five sites across the Wattle Range Council area.

Picture: FRED SMITH





Park owners oppose permit-free camping

From front page

“Now I read council is about to put aside \$1000 for new signs to state ‘free camping’ is available in some areas,” Mr Dommenz said.

The proposal to permit free camping arose from a staff report to the recent council meeting.

It was decided to seek public comment on the proposal which would allow motorhome owners and caravanners to stay for up to two nights at five sites, including Penola and Kalangadoo.

Development services director Glenn Brown said a by-law gave council the opportunity to designate areas where caravans and motorhomes are permitted

to stay for a period determined by the local government body.

According to Mr Brown, the growing trend is for caravanning tourists to seek free camping areas and it was also one of the most frequently asked questions at the three visitor information centres.

“By providing free camping sites, council would be encouraging tourists to ‘stay another day’ and build the economic benefits of tourism,” Mr Brown said.

“A decision not to allow free camping spots could be an opportunity lost for the businesses in the Wattle Range district as these travellers are likely to move on if they cannot secure a suitable site.”

During discussion on his report,

Cr Slim Reilly recommended that council send letters to the various business associations to obtain their views.

According to Cr Gwenda Lawlor, if council was to agree to the free camping policy, signs should be erected advising campers to take rubbish away with them.

Cr Sharon Cox said some campers were accessing free power by plugging cords into the sockets at the heritage-listed Tantanoola railway station.

Cr Dale Price said there would be a cost involved with inspections of the five free camping sites, but Mr Brown said this could be done as part of the regular movements of council’s inspectors.



Seaside village drives for RV friendly tag

MORE caravans and motor-homes could be headed for Cardwell as locals ramp up a campaign to make the seaside town 'RV friendly'.

The Cardwell District Community Association is currently in discussions with the Cassowary Coast Regional Council over the proposed plans.

CDCA president Keith Everingham said if the town could attract more overnight stay visitors it would help boost the local economy.

"We are hoping to get the RV's in Cardwell because they would stay here for 48 hours," he said.

"This means they stop in town look around and spend money when they buy fuel, alcohol and food. It will help the local economy out in a lot of ways with both tourism and local businesses.

"Most of the people in town are very interested in becoming an RV friendly town."

Cardwell is currently the only area in the Cassowary Coast region without a council run caravan park. Colleen's Park was the site of a council van park, but was closed down and no replacement site was

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Most of the people in town are very interested in becoming an RV friendly town

Keith Everingham
Cardwell District
Community Association



established. Cardwell and District Community Association's Caroline Mewing said making Cardwell RV friendly has huge potential.

"Very little investment is needed to provide space for large numbers of visitors," she said.

"Visitors who could easily spend time playing bowls and golf, bush walking the Thorsbourne trail and other tracks, fishing when the weather is good, generally make use of Cardwell's under used infrastructure such as the pool, tennis courts and netball courts."





Cardwell District Community Association is ramping up a campaign to get more visitors towing their caravans and motorhomes stay and play in the region.



Libs vow to reopen all Arthur-Pieman tracks

EXCLUSIVE

By **CAITLIN HEATHCOTE**

ALL 65 recreational vehicle tracks in and out of the Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area at Circular Head will be fully reinstated for use by recreational vehicles under a Liberal government.

Fifteen of the 65 tracks are closed to all recreational vehicles and have been for two years.

Others remain open, but some only have limited or partial access to the area.

Liberal leader Will Hodgman, deputy leader Jeremy Rockliff and Braddon Liberal MP Adam Brooks announced the party would stand by its commitment made to a crowd attending a protest rally against track closures in 2012.

The rally attracted 4000 people to Smithton, all voicing their concerns and disgust about the lack of community consultation on the slow closures of 15 of

the recreational vehicle tracks.

"These tracks give access to people [into the area] who have been using them for generations," Mr Brooks said.

Yesterday, Mr Brooks announced a Liberal government would allocate \$300,000 to invest in track repair and to reinstate the closed tracks.

The policy outlined by the Liberals will:

- retain the Arthur-Pieman as a multiple-use area;
- maintain access to all areas currently accessible;
- reverse the track closures; and
- enter into community consultation regarding the future use and proper care and management of the tracks.

Mr Brooks said with the tracks closed, the number of people visiting the area had dwindled over the past

two years and it had flow-on effects for businesses.

"We want to make sure people do the right thing and that's why we will invest in community-led consultation regarding the future sustainable use of the tracks," he said.

Mr Brooks said environmental concerns were high on the agenda regarding use of the tracks, but he believed a more sustainable approach could be found.



ACCESS BACK ON TRACK: At the Liberals' announcement on recreational access in the Arthur-Pieman area at Spreyton yesterday are (from left) deputy Liberal leader Jeremy Rockliff, Liberal leader Will Hodgman and Member for Braddon Adam Brooks. Picture: Jason Hollister.