



4WDs responsible

I HAVE concerns about Michael Mansell's letter regarding the proposed restoration of recreational vehicle access to the Pieman River (Letters, December 29). While I respect Mr Mansell's right to express his view, his letter gives the impression the restoration of RV access will mean open slather to damage heritage sites and natural features. This is not true.

Access to drive south of Sandy Cape to the Pieman River will require a special permit (in addition to the standard \$80 permit to drive in the Arthur Pieman Conservation Area) for which an additional fee must be paid. The money raised from

these access fees will go toward management. The proposed permit system will not entitle drivers of 4WDs and other RVs to go anywhere they like. They must travel on defined tracks. This will be monitored and enforced by all vehicles being fitted with a GPS, accurate to a couple of metres, which will provide the Parks and Wildlife Service with a log of vehicular travel between Sandy Cape and Pieman River, and will flag any travel into prohibited areas.

If Mr Mansell believes a \$1400 fine is "hardly a deterrent", he must have deeper pockets than me. The \$300,000 Mr Mansell mentions in his letter will be spent on barrier fencing, interpretative signage and other measures to ensure middens and village sites are protected.

I resent the implication 4WDs and other RV drivers destroy "precious heritage". A majority of recreational 4WD users have the same respect for heritage values as any other visitor. Contrary to misinformation peddled in the debate over RV access, we don't want new tracks through "pristine areas", we want to use tracks that are already there. We do not seek special favours, just fair access.

**Barney Campbell
Chigwell**



Campers attract bouquets and brickbats

THE *Mercury's* story on campervans taking up residence in the car park at the Austinmer boat ramp drew a mixed response from readers.

Despite photographic evidence to the contrary, a council spokesperson maintained on Wednesday there was no sign at the location prohibiting camping and there-

fore the council had no power to move the campers on.

Some online commenters felt the issue of signage was secondary and council should crack down regardless.

"No need for signs, install parking meters with rate payers exempt," a reader going by the name Blackduck wrote.

Adrian_now_of_Wollongong took a similar viewpoint.

"I remember reading once of someone who got away with stealing from the till on the grounds that no-one had told him he couldn't," he wrote.

"Seriously, things are illegal because they're illegal, not because there's a sign up about it."

Others felt the holidaymakers should be left in peace.

"They all spend money and if they are not a bother why harass them. Just keep a control on the camping," Isuzu wrote.

"The narrow view that campers are bludgers is incorrect. They contribute a lot of money to the economy."



TO THE POINT



IN REGARD to camping at Boat Harbour – we have stayed at Boat Harbour in our motorhome, which is self-contained, several times on our visits over here.

Three trips of seven months each year.

We love the spot, but, like everyone else, do not want to see it trashed and closed to campers.

The toilets have not been working properly for some time however, with about four motorhomes and a possible 50 per day cars, the

motorhomes form a small use of the toilets, some not using them at all.

As for small camper vans, not self-contained, tents and backpackers, I would suggest that a sign be erected similar to the one at Wynyard Showground with a parking fine similar to street parking and enforce it.

The fines would pay the wages.

JOE WILSON
Gympie QLD

■ The Advocate does not necessarily agree or disagree with the views of this letter, but it's how we like them: short and sharp.



Summer caravanning – park 'em up and enjoy the freedom

Angharad Owens-Strauss

While some families scramble to find new holiday destinations during the silly season, the decision is easy for Bathurst farmer Tim Bennett.

For the past 21 years, Mr Bennett, 47, his wife and their four kids have driven their six-berth family caravan up to The Entrance in NSW for the Christmas holidays.

It's all about the location, Mr Bennett said.

"You've got the lake behind you and the beach in front of you," he said.

Usually such a position would cost a pretty penny during the holiday season.

With a caravan, the possibilities are endless. And affordable.

"It's a good, cheap way of doing it," Mr Bennett said.

"You can just get on the road and pull up wherever you like. Pull up by the road and have a cuppa or pull up by the beach and have a beer."

Statistics released in 2012 by Tourism Research Australia found it cost up to \$120 a visitor per night for a camping or caravan holiday in 2011 - including groceries, entertainment, rental vehicles and even flights if necessary.

Staying in a hotel at The En-

trance can cost at least \$120 a night during this time of year.

For some caravaners it isn't just for the Christmas break, it's the perfect permanent getaway.

Don Lambert, 53, a traffic controller from St Marys, rents out a permanent spot for his caravan at The Entrance.

He said the caravan lifestyle is a nice change from suburban city streets.

"I live in St Marys, [which is a] bit of a rough neighbourhood," he said. "I have my young daughter [come to stay with me] every second weekend so, rather than stay in the suburbs, we come up here."

► **Richard Glover: How holidays have become hard work**
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On web, tablet and mobile
For a picture gallery, go to the website.



Left: Tim Bennett outside his family camper van at Two Shores Holiday Village at The Entrance.



Bill Golden, 87, has been a permanent resident of the Budgewoi Holiday Park on the central coast for 30 years.
Photos: Nic Walker



Don Lambert and his daughter Maddison stay at the Two Shores Holiday Village every second weekend.



Warning sign ignored

ANDREW PEARSON

WOLLONGONG City Council will review signage at the Austinmer boat ramp amid ongoing camping congestion at the prime beachside spot.

Dozens of campers have been occupying car spaces, some for days at a time, ignoring a nearby warning sign that says "overnight camping prohibited in this public place".

A council spokesman told the *Mercury* before Christmas there were no regulatory signs and therefore it wasn't illegal for people to stay overnight.

The area around the boat ramp was again popular with campers keen to avoid fees on New Year's Eve.

On Thursday, the spokesman said rangers had visited the boat ramp car park a number of times this week, but

reiterated little could be done to move campers on.

"There is no compliant signage that allows for penalty notices to be issued at Austinmer boat ramp for camping," the spokesman said.

"However, at each visit the camper vans at this site were legally parked.

"In 2015, council will review its signage at Austinmer boat ramp."

The decision comes after council had success shifting most overnight campers from Stuart Park on New Year's Eve, with all shade structures removed by 10.30pm.

As a result, no-one was fined for flouting the "no overnight camping" rules, however, 46 people were slapped with parking infringements.

Rangers and police conducted another sweep of Stuart Park after 6pm on Thursday.



No sign: Raphael Mizel and Charlotte Deslandre, backpackers from France, camp at Sharkeys Beach near Headlands Hotel; inset, the signage needing clarification. Pictures: ANDY ZAKELI