



Caravans on display

THE Queensland Caravan, Camping & Touring Holiday Show is back, this year marking the 50th anniversary of Caravanning Queensland.

About 300 exhibitors are expected to set up at the show displaying the latest models of caravans, motorhomes, campervans, camper trailers, off-road recreational vehicles and four-wheel drives.

■ The show will be held from June 4-10 at the RNA Showgrounds, Gregory Terrace, Bowen Hills. Information 3862-1833.

Rally spin-off boosts economy

MICHELLE BRADY

THE Nyah district has been reaping rewards from the influx of motorhomes to the region for both the Robinvale and Balranald rallies.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia drew thousands of people to the region for the two rallies which were held last month.

While no official event was scheduled for the Nyah district, the township benefited from the spin-off of these two events.

According to Lions member Geoff Bradbury, who was a driving force behind the installation of the dump point facility in Nyah, the site has drawn large crowds to the region in recent weeks.

While the site usually attracts between 35 and 45 vans each night at this time of year, Mr Bradbury said that figure had doubled as a result of the rallies.

"We have enjoyed a very fruitful few weeks," Mr Bradbury said, noting the site had been attracting up to 80 motorhomes each night in the lead-up to the rally.

"It has been a tremendous boost for our community."

Mr Bradbury said visitation increased again following the rally, with some members of the CMCA still exploring the region.

"They came from everywhere," Mr Bradbury said.

He said while it was

impossible to determine how much money was injected into the local community and surrounding areas during this time, the influx of visitors did benefit the local economy.

Mr Bradbury said he knew of one CMCA member who spent \$3000 on a new set of tyres while residing in the region.

St Arnaud residents Arnold and Helma Van Beek arrived in the region prior to Easter.

While they have previously stayed at the Nyah Recreation Reserve, they were joined by Arnold's sister and husband who were visiting the region for the first time.

Ms Van Beek said it was the peace and quiet of the site which first attracted them to the region.

"It's a lovely spot and we're not crowded in," Ms Van Beek said.

While they planned to stay a few days at the site over the Easter long weekend, Ms Van Beek said their group would be contributing to the local economy.

"We have got to go and get supplies," she said, noting they would be purchasing fuel and food during their stay.

She said they would also travel to Swan Hill to explore the town's shopping precinct and were likely to sample some of the region's produce while eating at local cafe's and restaurants.

"Any chance to shop, I will," she laughed.



STAY: St Arnaud visitors Arnold and Helma Van Beek spending time in the region during the Easter

Our aim is to provide a safe, welcoming and friendly place for those fully self-contained travellers who want to take advantage of their right to freedom of choice of where to stop and at the same time to support our community. ¶

GEOFF BRADBURY



HINCHINBROOK Hotspot trial to lure RV tourists

ALEXANDRA SHEEHY

MORE tourists are expected to stop in Ingham after council approved the Hinchinbrook's first RV parking site.

The Hinchinbrook Shire Council approved a six-month trial of a 48-hour parking site opposite the TYTO Wetlands Information Centre "to accommodate self-contained recreational vehicles".

Council plans to record the number of visitors that stop at the facility and collect information about their spending while in the Hinchinbrook before determining a more permanent parking site.

"There is evidence from similar facilities established in other shires similar to ours that indicate there is a significant economic benefit by encouraging these visitors to stay longer in our district and spend locally while they are here," Councillor Marc Tack said.

"But it is important council undertakes this type of assessment to determine economic benefits to the community."

Council has been investigating a self-contained RV facility since 2003 but in the past 12 months it believes feedback had shown there "appears to be a high level of support from local businesses and residents".

Visiting Gold Coast RV tourist Wayne Young said the Hinchinbrook could only benefit from the facility.

"Instead of continuing to drive through Ingham, people are now more likely to stop here for a couple of nights and see what the region has to offer," he said.

"Even if they just stock up on their fuel and food that is money the town wouldn't have had before."

Hinchinbrook Chamber of Commerce and Tourism president Mary Brown said the majority of her members had indicated support for the site.

"Their support is based on the Cooktown shire model, which has outlined the economic benefits for the community," she said.

"The chamber understands and shares caravan park owners' concerns and in a perfect world everyone would benefit, but that is why it is important this is a trial at first instance."

Council's Development and Planning manager Rosemary Pennisi said they planned to market tourism hot spots to RV visitors.

"Council will also erect promotional signage at the site with a map of the shire showing the location of commercial caravan parks and the top things to do," she said.

The six-month trial will run until the end of October.



THUMBS UP: Gold Coast-based RV tourists Wayne and Gail Young think the Hinchinbrook plan is a great idea. Picture: ALEXANDRA SHEEHY



Camping plan held up

The Narrandera Shire Council's attempt to regulate camping at the Brewery Flat continued to cause controversy at its most recent meeting.

The Council previously resolved to restrict parking on the Brewery Flat reserve to self-contained recreational vehicles only, with a maximum time of 72 hours per visit.

The Council submitted a plan of management to this effect to the NSW Government for approval, but Crown Lands advised that the Council requires development consent for the plan to be approved.

Government representatives indicated the application would not be approved unless koala habitat and management assessments were completed, at a potential cost of \$5000.

Cr Wesley Hall seemed less concerned about koala welfare than the prospect of a hit to Council coffers.

He asked if the Council could "get around" the cost of the assessments.

Cr Graham Eipper pointed out that koala studies had been undertaken before the koala fence was constructed along the Newell Highway.

Director of Technical Services Frank Dyrssen suggested modifying the existing studies.

"If there are applicable studies we could adopt them for this site and save the expense," he said.

The Council agreed to investigate modifying the studies to satisfy Government requirements.

During discussion on the item, Cr John Sullivan said restricting camping access was sending the wrong message.

"We're telling people we don't want them staying in Narrandera," he said.

"I'm not here to make a caravan park survive; I'm here to make Narrandera survive.

"We should do everything we can to welcome people."

Cr Sullivan said that there are more caravans than self-contained recreational vehicles (SCRVs) on the road.

General Manager Ray Pluis said SCRVs include self-contained caravans.

"The measures are designed to limit campers pitching tents," he said.

Cr Neville Kschenka said it was necessary to limit camping access to the Brewery Flat to self-contained vehicles.

"If we have every man and his dog pitching a tent, it will be chaos," he said.



Miss Narrandera Pin-up Competition winner Georgia Lynn Thomas (right) and runner-up Kristy Wallet outshining the rods at the Show and Shine at Narrandera Park on Sunday. Photo feature pages 6 and 7.



Free camp concerns

City tourist park operator calls for council to scrap site proposal

SANDRA MORELLO

AMOUNT Gambier tourist park operator has called on Grant District Council not to sweep in free camping sites near the city due to fears the move could hurt the viability of caravan parks.

Blue Lake Holiday Park assistant manager Brenton Kemp's comments follow council moving ahead with its plan to research possible free overflowing camping sites in its district.

At its recent full meeting, councillors also threw their support behind developing a framework and bylaws for free camping areas.

The move comes on the heels of Wattle Range Council's proposal to develop free parking areas triggering a strong backlash from at least five caravan operators in its district.

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