



**CONCERNED:** Blue Lake Holiday Park assistant manager Brenton Kemp calls on Grant District Council not to allow free camping sites near Mount Gambier. He wants to see the sites only in bush areas to lessen the impact on caravan park operators.

Picture: SANDRA MORELLO



## Free camp plan causes concerns

### From front page

It is understood some Mount Gambier caravan park operators are already concerned about low-cost camping at the city's showgrounds, which they argue is stripping away their business and threatening jobs.

Peak caravan park representative body SA Parks has called on council not to establish free sites less than 20km from a commercial facility and focus on areas off the beaten track.

"Free camping sites will have an impact on our park," Mr Kemp told *The Border Watch* yesterday.

He said campers could stay one night at a caravan park and then would move on to a free site for several days.

"We don't want them too close to the city, they should only be in bush areas," Mr Kemp said.

Cr Shirley Little welcomed the initiative at council's full meeting, but raised concerns over rubbish left behind by free campers.

"Quite a few people use the site at Tarpeena, I think it has benefited our community," Cr Little said.

"They have supported local businesses because they have a wander up the bike track and have a meal at the pub."

But she warned people did take "advantage" and had left piles of rubbish, including strewn car parts.

Meanwhile, council chief executive officer Trevor Smart said the issue of free parking raised "some passion" in the community with some supporting the move and others worried about the impact on caravan park operators.

"It is acknowledged that there is room in the industry for both forms of camping - free and within caravan parks," Mr Smart said.

While SA Parks was not adverse to free or overflow camping, he said it wanted councils to consider the effects on regional businesses who

ran caravan parks in close proximity to free sites.

"It is considered these guidelines will assist council in forming an approach on free camping and overflow camping, including what services/support are to be provided to council for these areas and any resultant cost imposts on council's resources," Mr Smart said.

SA Parks - which represents 140 caravan parks across regional and metropolitan SA - has released a policy guide for councils, given the upward free camping trend.

President Richard Davis said research showed persons staying in commercial caravan parks spent more per visit than those who camped for free.

"SA Parks and the caravan park industry fully support the idea of bush or freedom camping and also the provision of roadside stops for safety reasons, however we do have an issue with the provision of non-compliant camping areas in close proximity to existing caravan parks," Mr Davis said.

"Caravan parks employ local people and contribute significantly to the local economy."

He said the association believed councils were misinformed to believe that offering low cost camping spots was the only way to encourage caravan and camping enthusiasts into their area.

Mr Davis said councils must also consider the environmental impact and the cost to its coffers.

"Waste and rubbish must be removed, environmental degradation must be managed, sites must be inspected, areas maintained - all this is being funded by local residents via their rates and taxes," he said.

Mr Davis warned camping in townships was not free.

"Someone is paying, it's just not the camper themselves," Mr Davis said.



# Camp user response

## Recreation vehicle owners approve of sites

AFTER reading the letter to the editor from the concerned caravan park owners in the April 16 edition of *The Border Watch* regarding Wattle Range Council introducing free camping areas, we felt compelled to respond on behalf of the responsible self-contained recreational vehicle owners who enjoy this leisure pursuit.

We believe that councils should represent all businesses within its boundaries and shouldn't just pander to caravan park owners.

The percentage of free campers in self-contained rigs would be retirees and have no need for the facilities provided by the modern caravan park, such as large swimming pools,

water parks, kids' clubs and entertainment rooms.

These travellers are probably also on a fixed income and if forced to pay \$30 a night (or more) to stay in a caravan park with amenities they aren't going to use, you will find they will normally limit their stay and move on to an area that appreciates the extra money that these visitors can inject into the whole community, not just the pockets of greedy caravan park owners.

If these travellers can camp free in an area, you will find that they suddenly have more disposable income to spend within the area and are supporting a wide range of businesses, such as butchers, bakeries, coffee shops and

the list goes on.

As Ms Withers points out, there is already a problem with backpackers free camping, but not everyone should be punished by the actions of an irresponsible minority.

There will always be campers that prefer the benefits of staying in a well run caravan park and all campers will not suddenly revert to free camping.

The Wattle Range Council should be applauded and supported for putting any idea forward that may increase tourism, which will in turn bring welcome dollars to all businesses within our wonderful area.

**M and S Sheppard**  
**Mil-Lel**



# Council powering on



**LODDON  
SHIRE**

**CR GAVAN HOLT,  
Mayor,  
Loddon Shire Council**

LODDON Shire expects to cut its power bills and significantly reduce greenhouse emissions with a planned move to install solar panels at its Wedderburn offices.

The \$45,000 project, funded by the Victorian Government under the Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership, is a priority action under the shire's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2013-2018, which was approved by council late last year.

Shire manager of community and recreation, Allan Stobaus said the move aimed to reduce energy used from the grid, greenhouse emissions and council's power bills, but also to show leadership in the community.

"Last year, council's Wedderburn offices consumed 137,127kWh, or 380380kWh per day," he said.

"That usage was calculated as producing 162 tonnes of CO2 emissions at a cost to council of around \$37,000 for the year, or \$101 a day.

"The plan now is to install a 30kW system which will produce 43,800kWh a year or 120kWh each day.

"While power returned to the national grid will be nominal, council expects to cut its greenhouse emissions by 52 tonnes and its power bills by \$7000 a year."

An information board about the new system was being prepared for display in the office foyer.

"That will be followed

## New home almost here

The new manager's residence at the council-owned Wedderburn Caravan Park is nearing completion off-site, with delivery expected by the end of next month.

Contractor New Trend Transportable Homes, of Shepparton, is constructing the nine-square, two-bedroom timber home.

Project manager Adrian Lowrey said the house was being built in Shepparton and would be brought to Wedderburn to be assembled next to the current residence.

"The frame was finished earlier this month and the plasterboard and outside wall were to be installed before reaching lock-up stage," he said.

"That will be followed

by the fitting of plumbing, cabinets and electrical work and the necessary painting.

"Newtrend expects to come over to Wedderburn in early May to do the site works and footings and the estimated time for the home to arrive is later next month, subject to the builder obtaining the required road transport permits."

Council set aside \$120,000 for the work and the task will be accomplished within budget.

## Wider welcome for RVs

Loddon Shire has taken another step in its efforts to attract motorhome owners with the announcement that Pyramid Hill has been officially welcomed as an RV-Friendly Town.

This brings to three the number of RV-

Friendly Towns in the shire, after Wedderburn was approved in 2010 and Bridgewater succeeded in its application last year.

Street parking suitable for motorhomes, campervans and caravans will be signposted in Kelly Street, while short-term overnight stays will be permitted at the Pyramid Hill Caravan Park in Victoria Street at \$10 a night.

There is potable water and a free public dump point provided at the park.

Loddon Tourism manager, Robyn Vella said council intended to make Loddon an RV-

Friendly Shire and other sites at Boort and Inglewood were currently in mind.

The tag of "RV-Friendly Town" is bestowed after a formal accreditation process by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia, which is based in Newcastle.

With more than 66,000 members operating some 29,000 motorhomes, the club - the biggest of its kind in Australia - offers motorhome insurance, a monthly magazine, social events through its 97 local chapters, a Solos' Network for members travelling alone and two national rallies a year.

There are about 180 RV-Friendly Towns around Australia and that number is growing steadily.

## Help for new parents

New parents wanting to get together with others are invited to join a new group, facilitated by council's maternal and child health service, now meeting in Boort on the first Wednesday of each month.

The Boort New Parents' Group meets at the Boort Resource and Information Centre from 10am to 12 noon, with morning teas and guest speakers such as a dietician, speech pathologist and librarian.



New parents from other towns in the shire are also welcome. For further information, please phone Cindy Phelps on 0409 166 891.

### **Putting the bite on dental disease**

Loddon Shire's five kindergartens have embraced a new State Government program designed to improve the oral health of pre-school-aged children.

Ten teachers and assistants attended a two-hour training workshop at Serpentine late last month to hear more about how the program could be implemented.

The session was led by Melissa Magnone and Vicki Pfeiffer, from the Boort Dental Clinic, and Tanya Maher-Toose, community health nurse at Northern District Community Health Service at Kerang.

The local Smiles 4 Miles project is a partnership between Northern District Community Health Service, Boort District Health and Inglewood and Districts Health Service to cover both the Gannawarra and Loddon shires.

In 2013, more than 28,000 children across 484 early childhood services in Victoria participated in the Smiles 4 Miles program.

An initiative of Dental Health Services Victoria, Smiles 4 Miles is based on the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting Schools Framework.

It is mainly delivered in kindergartens, though childcare centres, family day care services and playgroups are welcome to participate.

A working group comprising Bethany Maher (IDHS), dietitian Alana Hosken (NDCHS), Vicki Pfeiffer and Tanya Maher-Toose will provide information and resources to young children throughout the coming year.

For more information, phone council's Serpentine office on 5437 7999.



# RV enthusiasts set to converge on Albany

Town's Anzac role will be a centrepiece of CMCA's rally



**PETER POAT**

**ALBANY'S** commemorations marking Anzac Day will be one of the centrepiece attractions for the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia when it gathers in the town next year for its major annual rally.

Up to 1000 local and interstate recreational vehicles will converge on the Great Southern town for the week-long event, the peak annual occasion for the 70,000-member body.

Rally co-ordinator Vince Calleja, who is also an Albany city councillor and executive member of the local chamber of commerce, is already gathering support for the rally, which will be held during the last week in October.

He recently visited a similar rally at Robinvale, in north-west Victoria, to garner support for the Albany rally and said interest was very strong. He took a trailer-load of material promoting Albany and WA as a tourist destination.

He will make a similar journey to Port Stephens in New South Wales for the CMCA's next rally. Two rallies are held every year, in March and October, the latter being the major event.

"At Robinvale, our Anzac commemorations certainly held significant interest for many people who indicated they would journey west for the first time.

"Although there are no specific Anzac events scheduled for the time of the rally, the town will have many ongoing

commemorative aspects which will enshrine its major role during World War I.

"One of the highlights for visitors will be the \$10 million National Anzac Centre currently being constructed next to the Princess Royal Fortress on Mt Adelaide. It will be opened later this year and will play an important role in depicting the town's significance during the conflict," Mr Calleja said.

The CMCA, the biggest RV organisation in the southern hemisphere, held its last West Australian rally at Kalgoorlie in October 2011 when 860 vehicles descended on the town

Independent economic modelling estimated \$1.6 million was spent in the Goldfields town, with the rally's total worth to WA about \$5 million.

Next year's rally will be held at Centennial Oval where preparations will involve installing power and water supply for every RV. The CMCA will transport three sea containers to the site packed with all the equipment necessary to provide these temporary facilities. The association spent about \$200,000 in Kalgoorlie to conduct the last WA rally.

As well as the economic benefits which Albany can expect, other towns around the State will also receive a boost from tourists combining extended trips around WA.

It was estimated that the Kalgoorlie rally had a flow-on affect for the State with the

average stay by interstate visitors being about 90 days. Many of those are set to return.

Mr Calleja said he already had indications from some interstaters that they would visit Albany for the Anzac Day commemorations in April, then spend the next five months touring the State before returning to Albany for the rally.

Mr Calleja said he had wonderful support from the city council and its chief executive Graham Foster.

"These rallies are impossible to run without the assistance of the local authority," he said.



The Kalgoorlie Rally attracted 860 campervans and motorhomes from around Australia.



Albany rally co-ordinator Vince Calleja inspects work on the National Anzac Centre on Mt Adelaide.



# HIGHWAY TO WELL

## Minister looks for Bruce alternative

**ROBYN IRONSIDE**

A SEARCH is under way to find a suitable inland alternative to the flood-prone Bruce Highway in Queensland.

Transport and Main Roads Minister Scott Emerson has confirmed his department is examining alternative routes to overcome the problem of all-too-frequent cuts to the Bruce, recently ranked as one of the world's worst highways.

Its perilous state was further highlighted last week when a two-metre pothole opened up south of Bowen, closing the road for more than 12 hours.

Mr Emerson said bringing the Bruce up to a suitable standard remained the State Government's priority but he was aware of the need for an inland alternative to improve access during flood events.

"This is something that has been talked about for many years and I have officers examining possibilities," he said.

"But we haven't made any decision yet."

The option being pushed by Member for Mount Isa Robbie Katter is to seal 130km of the Hann Highway – which would create a complete inland road from Cairns to Melbourne.

Mr Katter said the cost of such work would amount to about \$100 million – considerably less than the \$8.5 billion committed to the Bruce Highway over the next 10 years.

"The Hann Highway was first built by American soldiers in World War II," Mr Katter said.

"They identified the need for a second route in the north of Australia. The time has defi-

nitely come for us to finish that work."

As well as cutting 15 hours from the trip from Cairns to Melbourne, the inland route would allow "triple" road trains to carry produce between the two cities.

"Once you do that, you're taking a heap of B-doubles off the Bruce," Mr Katter said.

"That's going to extend the life of the Bruce considerably and reduce the need for constant maintenance."

RACQ public policy manager Michael Roth said the motoring group would support any upgrade of the Hann Highway providing the work was not at the expense of the Bruce.

"The Bruce Highway is the primary route because it links the major centres of the north," he said.

"It will remain the dominant and most important route so they need to keep the focus on upgrading it. But some money should go to improving the Hann Highway so there's an alternative link."

Grey nomads' advocate Ken Kipping questioned where funding would come from for such a project, and urged governments to work together to make it happen.

"People out in western Queensland need support," said Mr Kipping, director of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia.

"Our members try to get out and about to visit regional towns. For many of those towns, grey nomads are keeping them alive."