



# New project for low-cost RV Tourism parks

The accommodation options for self-contained recreational vehicle tourists are undergoing a significant change as the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) develops a project to establish an Australia-wide network of member-only recreational vehicle parks to provide low-cost, no-frills accommodation for self-contained RV tourists.

There has been a significant shift in RV sales within Australia to RVs with on-board shower, toilet, freshwater tanks, electricity generation and waste water containment.

This has coincided with decreasing availability of both commercial and non-commercial low-cost camping options to specifically meet the needs of these vehicles, creating an accommodation bottleneck.

As the commercial operators increase tariffs, CMCA is targeting low-cost RV parks to meet the basic needs of self-contained tourists, a dump point, potable water and a place to park.

The CMCA RV project follows similar initiatives by RV clubs in the UK and New Zealand. CMCA is confident its RV Park network will offer opportunities for CMCA to partner with RV rental businesses and other domestic and inbound tourism organisations to position Australia as a world-class RV tourism destination.

The project will bring a number of benefits to local government including:

- Development of a sustainable, eco-friendly tourism facility,
- No management costs or staff tied up in overseeing compliance, bookings or collecting fees,
- No maintenance costs or costs for upgrades and improvements,

- A return to ratepayers through rates and lease payments,
- An indirect return to ratepayers through increased tourism spend with local businesses by RV Park users,
- Avoiding time consuming competition policy or compliance issues,
- A member only, private camping ground for self-contained RVs with any self-contained RV owner able to join CMCA,
- Onsite CMCA volunteer custodian to ensure RV Park users meet CMCA Leave No Trace standards, and any lease requirements, and
- Towns able to maintain their RV Friendly Town status.

The state government supports the development of RV camping options allowing local government the opportunity to explore options to grow RV tourism. These options include partnering with CMCA to either lease existing camping grounds to CMCA or establish new RV parks on land leased or purchased by CMCA.

CMCA has identified these essential attributes for a CMCA RV Park:

- Located in a safe and sustainable location with ease of access for all vehicles,
- Acceptably flat land of approximately 10,000sq m (approximately 40-60 vehicles),



*National vehicle caravan park in Taupo, New Zealand, created by the NZ Motor Caravan Club*

- Likely to receive all necessary consents and approvals,
- Adjacent to, or within easy access of, major roads or highways,
- Able to install a dump point at or within 200m of the location,
- Fits with the long-term objective of an integrated national RV accommodation network.

The first CMCA RV Park is planned to open at Ingham later this month.

Further information is available from Colin Balfour. Call 0412 373 544 or email [colinbalfour@cmca.net.au](mailto:colinbalfour@cmca.net.au) ■



Far North Nomads president Len Hine looks forward to the town's Christmas in July celebrations on July 23-26, with funds raised going back into the community.

Picture: Andrea Falvo

## Grey Nomads motor into Mareeba

HUNDREDS of grey nomads will pour into Mareeba next month to celebrate the town's 18th annual tropical Christmas in July celebrations.

Hosted by the Far North chapter of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) with the support of Mareeba Shire Council, the three-day event from July 23-26 will feature live entertainment, raffles, activities for the kids, food and much more at Davies Park.

Profits from the event will be donated to several local

charities and organisations.

Event co-ordinator Milford Virtue hoped for about 300 vehicles at this year's event.

"Christmas in July is a popular rally with CMCA members travelling from all over Australia to partake in the fun and entertainment," he said.

"Mareeba is a great venue for this event because of the weather and proximity to shopping from the rally grounds."

Mareeba Shire Mayor Tom Gilmore said the annual event was a great way for locals to

mingle with the town's visitors.

"Mareeba has a great reputation with the travelling public and we welcome them with open arms," he said.

"The event will feature a wide variety of information stalls from local businesses and tourist destinations.

"Many of the amazing vehicles will be open for the public to see on the day."

The gold coin donation entry fee will be shared between the Mareeba State Emergency Service and the Mayor's Christmas Appeal.



## FLAT PACKS Start-up manufacturer taps the Sunshine Coast's love for RVs

# The return of caravans?

FAR from being reserved for retired holiday-makers, caravans are making a comeback as the “glamping” vehicle of choice for families.

Half of Australian caravan users are now aged 30 to 54, and the Sunshine Coast is becoming a base for caravan manufacturing.

As the caravan manufacturing sector grows, so does the number of start-up businesses such as the quirky Zone RV in Cooloom.

Zone RV makes flat-pack caravans for off-road campers.

Manufacturing in Australia has plummeted to an all-time low, but this year figures from the Caravan Industry Association of Australia show the country's production of recreational vehicles is the second highest it has been.

Zone RV's team is behind the world's first kit-set caravan, said manager Marty Bell.

The company makes a range of on and off-road caravans, tow-away haulers and ute-back campers that allow people to design their own to suit their needs.

Mr Bell said traditionally caravans were built with a timber frame and the spatial arrangement of items within were limited, but Zone RV had ditched this model in favour of one people could assemble in their own garages.

“We have no frame – you can cut down a window and frame wherever you like –

there are no restrictions,” he said.

Zone RV is the creation of long-time friends Matt Johns and Dave Biggar who put their plan into action 18 months ago.

It was perfect timing for the Coast business with more families turning to caravanning and camping for leisure.

The “grey nomad” network was also important, Mr Bell said.

“On the road they will park their caravan, pour themselves a drink and sit back and watch the other vans set up,” he said.

He said people could now put their dreaming of the perfect van into practice by creating their own.

Zone RV employs nine people and seeks out local upholstery contractors, engineering firms and other professionals to complete its projects.

Mr Johns said: “We're relatively young Coast guys and we're pretty keen on trying to support the Coast economy.”

“There's a market for a high-end off-road caravans and most of those are built in SEQ on the Coast.”



**GLAM VANS:** Matt Johns of Zone RV in Coolum says the production of recreational vehicles is the second highest it has been.

*PHOTO: JOHN MCCUTCHEON*



## Motorhomes trial may start soon

# Spot chosen for campers

By **Jim Gainsford**

CAMPERVANS and motorhomes could soon be allowed to park overnight on a trial basis in Sutherland Shire Leisure Centre car park.

A Sutherland Shire Council report has recommended the leisure centre car park as the best location for the vehicles.

Campervan Motorhome Club of Australia figures show an estimated 80,000 caravanners travel around Australia at any one time, with "grey nomads" making up to 70 per cent, travelling for an average of 165 days.

There were 9.2 million caravanning, camping and motorhome trips in 2012.

These travellers spent an average \$70 to \$90 a day in the local economy, and Sutherland Shire now wants a share of that market.

But it wants to avoid the negative effects of overnight parking seen in some other Sydney coastal councils.

Cronulla was considered as a possible location for a campervan trial but the council decided that there would be too much impact on local residents.

Hungry Point in South

Cronulla was also looked at as a potential site, but was ruled out.

The Bonna Point car park at Kurnell was too far from one of the shire's central business areas.

Engadine and Caringbah leisure centres were considered but it was decided they were too close to a residential area.

Because campervans are typically en route from Sydney to Melbourne or Sydney to Cairns, the most suitable location was somewhere just off the Princes Highway.

Sutherland with its close transport links and proximity to the Royal National Park was considered to be a draw-card for the motorhome and campervan market.

Visitors would have full access to the Sutherland Leisure Centre where infrastructure is already in place.

Establishment costs are being estimated at \$165,000 including installing power, lighting and water supply, a boom gate, signposting and security.

If approved by the council, the car park would be used for a 12-month trial period.



# Set for happy campers

THE beautiful Somerset region has a variety of camping areas.

As well as the abundance of RV friendly areas available to travellers in Somerset, the council will highlight its rest areas and dog-friendly sites as well as the multitude of food businesses and tourism attractions in the region.

Somerset Mayor Graeme Lehmann said the council was committed to working with tourism operators to promote the region, their facilities and available services in Somerset to the travelling public.

"Council has in recent years strengthened its tourism brand and injected millions of dollars into building and promoting tourism in Somerset and showcasing our beautiful region is just another way of spreading the word and supporting our local economy," Cr Lehmann said.

The council maintains and provides several rest areas for RVs in Somerset including sites at Fernvale, Harlin, Linville, Moore, Toogoolawah and Kilcoy.

Caravan and RV dump points are also available in Somerset at the Esk Caravan Park, Clive St; in Fernvale, the Kilcoy Showground, Lowood Showground and the Toogoolawah Showgrounds.

"There are plenty of places to stay while enjoying Somerset including camping grounds, RV-friendly sites, bed and breakfasts and motels to suit a variety of travellers," Cr Lehmann said.

"There are also plenty of places that caravanners can visit while enjoying a stay in Somerset including short day-trips to nearby townships that have an array of heritage sites and great food places to visit.

"We encourage visitors to stop in at one of the three council-managed visitor information centres at Esk, Kilcoy or Fernvale."



Let us know your favourite location in the region

**WE ENCOURAGE** people to get out more and explore the wonders of our region, so share your favourite place with us and let us know why it is so special. Email [cabnewsed@scnews.com.au](mailto:cabnewsed@scnews.com.au) or send a letter to Caboolture News and Bribie Weekly at PO Box 222, Caboolture, 4510.



## In brief

### RV friendly tick for Leitchville

Leitchville has become the first town in Gannawarra Shire to be an RV Friendly Town.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia grants the accreditation to towns which provide appropriate parking for long vehicles in the town centre.

Gannawarra Shire is hoping the title will boost the economy.

“We hope to see a growth in the number of visitors who travel in their motorhome or campervan to Leitchville and hopefully to the whole shire,” mayor Neville Goulding said.

“Gannawarra Shire is a great destination for people travelling in self-contained accommodation as we have a stunning natural environment for people to enjoy at their leisure.”

Cr Goulding said the RV stopover area in Leitchville provided public toilets and was a pleasant area to camp.

Council is working with community members in other towns to achieve RV Friendly Town accreditation.



# Review of RV parks

KINGSTON District Council has decided to revise and review the town's RV park locations.

Council held a workshop on May 22 to discuss Kingston's free RV parks due to concerns relating to the effective management of the parks and the potential imbalance with respect to the Kingston Caravan Park.

The workshop considered policy implications for council, records of inspections, current issues and future opportunities.

It was also suggested that council introduce new provisions for the use of the main RV park adjacent to the Lions Park, such as excluding tents and standard, non-camping vehicles.

At council's June meeting, it was originally proposed that both Wyomi and Pinks Beach RV parks be closed due to new land development in the area and in consideration of the revised by-laws at the main RV park.

While councillors agreed with the closure of the Wyomi Beach site, some questioned whether closing the Pinks Beach site was necessary.

"I can't see a reason the Pinks Beach site can't stay open as there needs to be a place where long-term RV users can stay in off-peak times otherwise they'll up and go," Cr Kay Rasheed said.

An expansion of the main RV park site to compensate for the closure of the Wyomi beach site was also mentioned.

Council also discussed encouraging the caravan park to offer a discount during off-peak times so RV park users would potentially stay longer.

"Rather than enlarge the main site immediately, perhaps we should enlarge it if required after assessing

the situation after 12 months," Cr Jeff Pope said.

Cr Graham Usher agreed: "We'd find out over a year if everything (the discounts and closures) is all working, it would be a bit drastic to expand the current area right away."

Cr Rasheed wasn't sure whether RV users would stay for a substantial amount of time during the cooler months no matter what was offered.

"Fair enough about the (caravan park) discount, but it's not the off-peak times people want to stay here for four or more days," Cr Rasheed said.

Signage to promote the caravan park discounts and visually communicate free RV park compliance requirements were also discussed at the meeting.

The RV Friendly Town scheme is an initiative of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia and is a helpful way for caravaners to identify small towns to plan a stopover.

Kingston has held RV Friendly status since September, 2010.

Cr Usher moved the six revised recommendations which were:

- That council resolves to continue to make available the RV park adjacent to the Lions Park, but eliminate the need to be self-contained and allow RVs, caravans, wickivans, campervans and 4x4 vehicles with dedicated roof top camping, 24-hour access to the park.

- That council resolves to exclude tent camping and standard vehicles (non-specific camping vehicle) from utilising the RV park.

- That the RV park adjacent to the Lions Park be monitored over the next 12 months and additional capacity



considered if required.

- That the parking area at Pinks Beach remain in place until a new long-term parking area for RVs within the Kingston township is identified.

- That council resolves to close Wyomi Beach RV park in consideration of the new land development within the area.

- That administration brings back to council a report that accordingly amends the appropriate council by-laws to reflect the above resolutions.

These were seconded by Cr Rasheed.



Kingston District Council will monitor the town's main RV Park over the next 12 months to see if additional capacity is required.

# 'Safari' shows Mareeba's produce



Mareeba Heritage Centre Tropical Food Safari Team volunteers. — Picture: MAREEBA HERITAGE CENTRE.

**M**AREEBA Heritage Museum and Visitor Information Centre will hold a Tropical Food Safari on Friday, July 10, and has invited 'RV travellers'.

Entry to the tropical food presentation and tasting is by gold coin donation and it is recommended visitors arrive before 10am as entry will be closed once the presentations begin.

Mareeba Heritage Centre volunteers

will present their choice of tropical foods and tourism operators Skybury Farmgate and Coffee Works will also participate.

"Our volunteers are gearing this year's presentations to our RV (recreational vehicle) travellers," Mareeba Heritage Centre chairman Evan McGrath said.

"While on their travels they will hopefully tell the rest of Australia what an abundance of tropical delights we have growing here in the Mareeba Shire.

"We are holding our Tropical Food Safari presentations on the Friday prior to the Mareeba market day throughout the peak tourism season," Mr McGrath said.

Mayor Tom Gilmore said: "We are delighted Mareeba Heritage Centre is holding this event again and their volunteers do a wonderful job in showcasing the tropical foods grown in the food bowl we have here in our region."



# Shire to consult over Winchelsea RV idea

BY JAMES TAYLOR

THE Surf Coast Shire says there will be more public consultation before any moves are made to declare Winchelsea an RV-friendly town.

Growing Winchelsea Inc has been pushing the concept locally, and the shire promised to consider the idea more fully as part of the recently-adopted Growing Winchelsea: Shaping Future Growth plan.

At their meeting last week, councillors resolved to run further consultations with the Winchelsea community about establishing an "RV-Friendly Parking" area for a set period on a proposed site on the Barwon River at the end of Mercer Street, particularly with the caravan park operator and surrounding land owners, with a report to be presented to councillors by December.

To qualify as an RV-Friendly Town (RVFT), which are promoted around Australia by the Campervan Motorhome Club of Australia, a town must have:

- Appropriate parking within the town centre, including access to a general shopping area with groceries and fresh produce
- Provision of short term (24/48 hour) parking for self-contained vehicles within the town precinct
- Access to potable water, and
- Access to a free dump point within the town precinct.

The report to councillors notes the cost estimates of the proposal range between \$65,500-\$82,000 initially and \$31,100-\$41,100 annually.

It also notes the wider issue of freedom camping, which was the subject of a Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism (GORRT) issues paper in March.

GORRT will run a forum with its partner councils about the challenges and opportunities of freedom camping later this month.

Cr Heather Wellington said she had heard a lot of support for an RV-friendly area within the community but "there hasn't been that thorough, systematic consultation, and I think that's what we need".

"The practice (of RVs camping by the Barwon River) has been happening for quite a long time and perhaps a little under the radar."



## Senior Matters



With Wayne McDonnell

# Grey nomads embrace life on the road

TRAVEL any highway in Australia and you will see plenty of vehicles towing caravans behind them.

Caravan parks across the country are filled with vans, camper trailers and tents housing people, usually older Australians travelling around in their retired years.

In Australia we use the term “grey nomads” – an expression used fondly to refer to older people making the most of their twilight years and ‘living the dream’.

So what is it about travelling around with your home ‘on your back’ so to speak?

From what I have been told it is a very relaxed way to travel and see the country.

But there is more to it than that. For instance many friendships are formed and people meet up with each other at different places through out their travels.

If you get into one place and decide you want to see more, you can just stop for as long or a short as you like.

The other issue is cost, as it is much cheaper than paying overnight accommodation at motels and hotels. And there are a lot of free camping places around.

Free camping has become very popular since caravans have been designed for off-road travelling.

For some it has become a lifestyle. Many sell their homes and furniture to purchase mobile homes.

Some tow a small car behind or other forms of transport to use once parked in a spot. This all depends on the size of the van or mobile home.

Some of these are extremely big and have extendable features that incorporate lounge areas, showers and toilets. All these features are designed to make it as comfortable as possible while on the road.

However, it is not all beer and skittles towing your home around the country.

There are many safety measures that need addressing before, during and after your tour. And towing a caravan or camper trailer behind your vehicle is not the same as driving only your vehicle.

Road conditions, speed, fatigue and other aspects of recreational vehicle usage are very important if you are to enjoy your trip accident free.

Therefore, before you start on your trip make sure you are fully aware of all the requirements associated with ‘living the dream’ of touring this vast country.

“If you get into one place and decide you want to see more, you can just stop for as long or as short as you like



**NEW ADVENTURES:** Making all of Australia your home is easy when you have a reliable car and a good caravan.



# It's backyard bliss for holidaymakers **intent** on pegging a bargain

## AIDAN DEVINE

CAMPERS are pitching tents in suburban backyards as homeowners cash in on a new, low-budget accommodation service.

Charging between \$15 and \$30 per night, hundreds of residents have registered their properties on Home-camp, a website connecting them with holiday-makers wanting to save money by sleeping out in yards.

Touted as the Airbnb for camping, homeowners list their properties on the website along with a description of the location and services on offer, which can include

use of toilets, laundry and wi-fi. Home-camp's founder, Frenchman David Abitbol, who conceived the idea while touring Australia, said the majority of hosts provide basic facilities. However, one listing at Randwick advised campers there was "no toilet or shower available" and recommended they use the facilities across the road at the University of NSW.

Mr Abitbol said: "Hosts are free to provide whatever they like, but those who don't share their facilities probably won't attract interest from campers."

Council regulations also

play a major factor with some allowing residents to rent out

their backyard, while others limit the time campers can stay — usually four nights.

Other councils including Waverley — a popular choice for backpackers due to its proximity to Bondi Beach — do not permit camping without approval in advance.

Caravan and Camping Industry Association spokeswoman Callie Henderson commended the innovation, but said it raised "concerns".

"Our concerns would be for the safety of the consumer," she said.

"We don't want to see situations where someone rents out their backyard unwittingly against the regulations."

Parts of the Home-camp concept are still being refined, including how hosts and campers are screened and reviewed.

Jasmin Taylor, who runs a camping shop on Sydney's northern beaches, has noticed a surge of interest within the camping community, not just among backpackers, but also local travellers.

"It's a fantastic idea. You can travel for cheap or you can make a bit of money

from your backyard," Ms

Taylor said.

Fellow northern beaches residents Tracy and Rob Morris are eager to sign up to the service.

"It seems like a great way to save money," Mrs Morris said.

"Travelling is expensive with a family, so we'll be using the service our next trip. For now, we're happy to let travellers use our backyard."





Tracy and Rob Morris from Dee Why, with daughter Marli, 3, and (inset) Jasmin Taylor with daughter Emi and sons Oscar and Max. Pictures: David Swift and Braden Fastier