



## | Online advice will get you moving

THESE days, a trip away often begins on the home computer.

So the new Virtual Caravan Park on the Destination NSW website will be the first stop for many planning to hitch up and hit the road.

The digital destination lets you take a virtual look inside the latest caravan and camping accommodation styles, such as motorhomes, caravans, cabins, safari tents and camper trailers.

Caravan and Camping Industry Association chief executive Lyndel Gray said the new campaign was

a partnership between the NSW division and Destination NSW.

“People can take 360-degree tours inside vans, vehicles, a variety of camping products and cabins, search for their ideal holiday destination from more than 400 holiday parks, get information on manufacturers, dealers and where to go for service and repairs,” she said.

“It even has a section featuring pet-friendly parks,”

■ Virtual Caravan Park,  
[vp.caravan-camping.com.au](http://vp.caravan-camping.com.au) or  
[www.visitnsw.com](http://www.visitnsw.com)



# Free camping on the rise

**FREE** and low cost camping sites are common in South Gippsland, with more than 50 in the Wellington Shire.

Council mayor, Scott Rossetti said in April 2012, the shire hosted the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia national rally.

"Since then, we have continued to be at the forefront of camping, offering a range of options for residents and visitors within our beautiful region," he said.

South Gippsland Shire Council is proposing to promote free camping sites around the municipality to lure the rapidly growing motor home market, as part of its draft Recreational Vehicle (RV) Strategy.

The council wants to promote Franklin River Reserve at Toora as a site suitable for RVs to stay.

But that proposal would rob caravan parks of business, Rachel Brown of the Toora Tourist Park said.

Ms Brown said promoting the Franklin River Reserve as a motor home stop would negatively impact her nearby business.

"Every night there is up to 10 groups there: peo-

ple in tents, motor homes and staying in cars. Most of them are not self contained," she said.

"There is one toilet block serviced by tank water and no shower facilities, so I guess that's why they sneak into my caravan park at night to have a free shower."

Owner at Best Friend Holiday Retreat in the Tarra Valley Ralph Cooper said he doubts the free camping sites greatly affect their business.

"But I don't think it is very fair that people can spend time in places where there are no regulations in place," he said.

"We pay various fees to the shire and as a caravan park; we are under a lot of scrutiny. Free camping however, doesn't have to have any of those controls in place.

"I don't think it affects our business too badly, but I don't think it is right."

Mr Cooper said another thing concerning about free camping areas is the danger of fire.

"There is a lot less control in free camping areas, and therefore the risk of fire breaking out is a lot higher than in a caravan park," he said.

"I am concerned these areas are available, because I don't think they should be."

Keith Moxham of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia said RV owners should have the right to stay at free camping reserves.

"Wellington and East Gippsland shire councils had adequate dump points and are drawing visitors away from South Gippsland," he said.

Cr Rossetti said the Wellington Shire has three RV-friendly towns and 11 RV waste disposal sites.

"Local camp grounds include the Tarra River rest area near Yarram, the Hiawatha camping ground, the White Woman's Waterhole campground in Won Wron and free camping areas between Golden Beach and Seaspray in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park," he said.

The free camping area located at the Tarra River rest area is maintained by the Yarram Lions Club.

Club secretary Carol Kavanagh said they look after it on behalf of Keep Australia Beautiful program and believes it is an asset to the town.

"Sometimes I have been past there and there are half a dozen campers parked there. The last time we cleaned it up, there was a family there from New South Wales, who commented on how good and neat it was," she said.

Ms Kavanagh said she doesn't think having the option of free camping nearby to Yarram detracts business from local caravan parks.

"No it doesn't, because I live next door to a caravan park and I see how busy they are. They are always booked out," she said.

"The free camping area provides a good alternative for those who want

to stop when the caravan parks are booked out.

Ms Kavanagh said having the option of a free camping area definitely helps to encourage people to stop in Yarram, and enjoy the area.

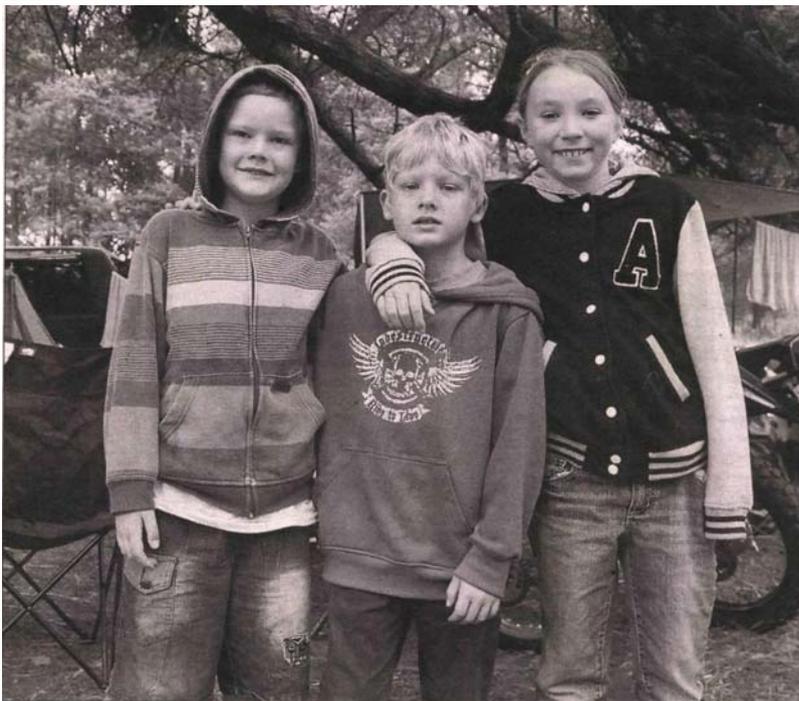
"The one beautiful thing we find about the

area is people don't leave their rubbish behind. People appreciate these stops," she said.

"We keep it clean and tidy and once every six months we have a huge working bee to give it the works. We are very proud of it."



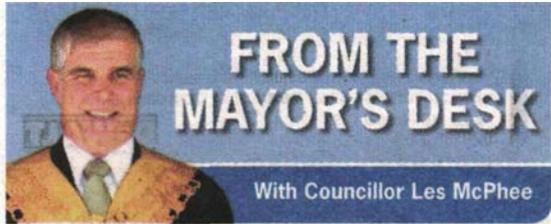
**Ship mates:** from left Michelle Harrington from Sale, Alicia Jones and Callum Jones from Binginwarri and Rueban Baldwin from Woodside were getting ready to ride the rapids while camping at Hiawatha over the new year period.



**Friends and family:** Dylan Coulthard, Lincoln Sketcher and Tamika Gregson from Yarram were enjoying their time camping at Hiawatha in January.



# Roadworks and rallies



## Roadworks

TWO major roadworks projects are underway in our municipality, and another is soon to start.

Last week, council started work on the Lake Boga-Ultima Road. A 5.4km section will be widened to 6.2m to improve the road for use by all motorists, but especially trucks carting grain and other produce through the area.

The work is happening from Dog Netting Fence Road back towards Lake Boga and should be completed by mid-May.

This project has been funded entirely by the state government's Country Roads and Bridges Program, to the tune of \$700,000.

We also started work

last week on Woorinen Road, where we will reconstruct an 800m section of road, from Bish Road towards Woorinen South.

Temporary traffic lights will be in place, and we encourage drivers to be cautious in the area. We expect this work to be finished by Easter.

Later this month the final 800m stretch of Karinie Street will be reconstructed, also with funding from the Country Roads and Bridges Program.

## Pedestrian access

IN FEBRUARY, new gates were installed at the council carpark off Splatt Street to provide



**RALLY:** Hundreds of campervans, including some of these solos, are on their way to Rally Robinvale.

security for council's fleet cars.

A pedestrian gate through the carpark was originally to remain closed to the public at all times, but council has now decided to leave it open during business hours. This will give pedestrians a thoroughfare between Beveridge and Splatt streets once again.

Both the pedestrian and vehicle gates will

be closed overnight during the week, and all weekend to provide security for council's fleet cars.

## CMCA rally

IF YOU notice lots of caravans and motorhomes on the road over the weekend, they'll most likely be on their way to Robinvale.

It will be an exciting week for Robinvale between March 31 and

April 6 as they host about 1000 caravans and motorhomes for the 28th Anniversary CMCA Rally.

The visitors will be getting out and about during their time at the rally, and we have encouraged them to visit Swan Hill and Lake Boga with organised tours and packages to our tourist attractions.

Please make them feel welcome.



## Ellis moves on

ELLIS Girrard, the country music singer embroiled in a stoush with Tamworth Regional Council and neighbours over his camping on a Manilla property, has bowed to pressure and moved on.

Mr Girrard and his wife Jackie parked their motorhome in a paddock on McDonald St, Manilla, last month after seeking permission from the owner.

They were soon deemed an “environmental hazard” by Tamworth Regional Council and ordered to vacate the property, but vowed to hold their ground.

Following a legal threat last week by neighbour Tim Rees, who claimed the couple’s generator was keeping his family awake and demanded they move on by yesterday, the Girrards finally relented.

They are believed to have moved their bus to another private property in Manilla.



## Travelling over the countryside

MORE than 200 solo campervan and motorhome travellers have spent a week in Balranald as part of a rally. CMCA Solos Network secretary Rainey Parsell, Val Spencer and Joye Tobin enjoy Greenham Park with their dogs Beau James, Maggie May and Molly. Many of the travellers are now on their way to the Rally Robinvale, which begins next week.  
**PICTURE — Emma Manser**  
**FULL STORY — Page 9**



**GATHERING:** There were nearly 220 campervans and motorhomes present at the Balranald CMCA Solos' Network Rally.



**A HIT:** Demand for the delicious biscuits from Balranald's Cafe Cassaro skyrocketed during the rally, with the cafe cooking up more than 1700 biscuits over the week for morning tea.



# Solos head to Robinvale

## EMMA MANSER

MORE than 200 solo campervan and motorhome travellers have now left Balranald following a rally in the town.

Nearly 220 campervans and motorhomes descended on Greenham Park for a week-long stay, travelling the municipality and utilising local businesses.

Among the many community events on offer, were line dancing, meditation and a Seniors Week lunch held at Theatre Royal last Tuesday.

CMCA Solos Network secretary Rainey Parsell and fellow traveller Val Spencer said the group had thoroughly enjoyed their stay.

They said that throughout the week the group had spent in excess of \$62,000 in the local area.

That figure was expected

to rise, with some staying on while others would spend more money as they left.

Additional to the 218 people who attended the rally were a number of furry and feathery companions.

As the Solos' Network is for people who travel alone, Ms Parsell said many chose to travel with pets.

She travels with her two dogs, Beau James — who is fairly new to rallies — and Maggie May.

"We think probably half of the people here have pets with them — there are birds, cats and dogs," Ms Parsell said.

"A lot of these people are on the road permanently, so their pets are like family."

According to Ms Spencer, many of the solos had plans to move on to the annual CMCA rally in Robinvale, set to begin on March 31.

"Quite a few people will go

on to Robinvale," Ms Spencer said.

"That is what we call the grown-ups — the couples — [our group] we are all solo people from all over Australia."

Euston Club CEO Ray Jones said they were in the midst of building a "little city" at the Robinvale Riverside Sporting Fields for the upcoming rally.

"We've got 900 motorhomes booked in, so it is going to be big," he said.

"We expect it to throw \$2 million into the town.

"Everywhere within 150km is being looked after [in the lead-up to the event]."

Entertainment is planned for each night of the week-long event, with Paul Costa to kick things off at the official opening on March 31.

An open day will be held on April 5 for the public to come in and have a look.



Residents aren't pleased that tourists are camping in an area which isn't a designated camping spot, taking up multiple spots in the car park. Phil Beddoe said he understood locals would be territorial. He is pictured with daughter, Anna. Picture: ALBEY BOND  
**Inset:** Campers at Bombo.

# Tents claim sea view

**BRENDAN CRABB**

THE RECENT holiday season resulted in an unusually large influx of visitors camping at the northern end of Bombo beach, drawing a mixed response from residents.

Residents have recently taken to social media to vent frustrations regarding tourists camping on land north of Bombo beach. Shiree Miller, of Kiama Downs, is a regular walker at the beach.

She reported having difficulty getting a car park, because campers had set up tables and chairs, while parked campervans sometimes took up several spaces.

Mrs Miller said this started before Christmas.

"You can't even pull up and check the surf really.

"We pay our rates, and they have prime position here.

"One week there was about four tents set up

here, as well as the campervans. Enough's enough."

Phil Beddoe, of Gainsborough, is another regular user.

"They take up a few spots, but not all," he said.

"I imagine some locals would be fairly territorial.

"As long as there's not too many people there it seems OK."

Kiama's Joan Gleave walks her dog at the informal camp site twice each day.

"It only seems to have got really bad this year, more people doing it . . . probably because it's free."

Dapto's David Hill uses Bombo beach daily.

He believed it had been listed as a free camping site on a travel app such as WikiCamps Australia.

He said most were well-behaved, although a few started fires, while others hung underwear out to dry.

According to a Kiama Council spokesperson, the land is zoned E2 Environmental Conservation and

owned by Sydney Water.

"E2 zoned land does not allow use of the land as a designated camping ground," the spokesperson said.

"To date the council has received no formal complaints regarding the matter."

A Sydney Water spokesperson said part of Sydney Water's land at Bombo headland is accessible to the public for use as a walking track and, infrequently, by campers.

"While Sydney Water does not promote this site for camping, we have had no issues when it has been used for this purpose," the spokesperson said.

"If members of the community have any concerns about how the land is being used we encourage them to contact Sydney Water on 13 20 92."

Do you have a problem with camps or campervans in the area? Let us know: kinews@fairfaxmedia.com.au.