



RV travellers in their droves attended last year's Show and this year will again travel to Cooktown to celebrate their own event, 'Party like it's New Year's Eve!', which will be held from July 28 to August 4. This photo depicts just a portion of the RVs parked at the racecourse last year. Photo: GARY HUTCHISON.

Party like it's New Year's Eve – RV Event

COOKTOWN'S annual RV Event will be held this year from Monday, July 28 to Monday, August 4 at the Cooktown Racecourse.

The event is going to be celebrated and promoted as "Party like it's New Year's Eve!" to follow on from the 'Christmas in July' event held in Mareeba the week before.

Following the success of the 2013 RV Event, this year's event could potentially attract double or even triple the amount of visitors. Cook Shire Council will not only be organising this tourism event, but actively promoting it at the Townsville Dam Fine Rally and Christmas in July RV Event in Mareeba.

There are many opportunities for

local businesses and community organisations to be a part of this event by providing activities for our visitors to participate in during their stay in Cooktown. Tour packages and light entertainment will ensure these RV travellers have a full and enjoyable stay.

Council is currently drafting a program of events and is urging any interested groups or business operators to make contact with the Economic Development and Community Services team as soon as possible to discuss opportunities for involvement in this major tourism event for Cooktown.

For further information, contact 4069 5444 or email mail@cook.qld.gov.au.



Visitor Lisa Mora peeks out of her vintage van. FILE PHOTO.

Caravanners helping to drive visitor numbers higher

More visitors and money are flowing into Cowra than ever before according to Destination NSW, with the release of the latest Local Government Area tourism statistics.

Covering a three-year annual average ending September 2013, the figures show an 11 per cent increase in overnight visitors to Cowra - from 105,000 visitors per year on average from 2008-2011 to 117,000 visitors per year on average from 2010-2013.

In addition, the average overnight spend for visitors to Cowra has risen from \$35 million per year to \$42 million per year from 2010-2013, an average increase of \$8 million per year.

The average total of nights spent by visitors has also increased by 14 per cent over the last three years, from 283,000 nights per year to

325,000 nights per year.

The findings correlate with the recent release of the National Visitor Survey by Caravan and Camping Industry Association NSW, which showed the camping and caravan sector accounted for 30 per cent of overall tourism growth in the state.

"Caravan and camping is now experiencing significant growth - punching well above its weight and making it a major contributor to the NSW economy," CCIA NSW CEO, Lyndel Gray told media.

"In the year to December 2013, close to 2.4 million people stayed in commercial caravan or camping accommodation in this state, delivering more than 11 million visitor nights.

"This is an additional 303,000 visitors to commercial caravan parks on the previous year,

and an additional 727,000 visitor nights."

Cowra Tourism Manager, Belinda Virgo said the statistics mean Cowra is excelling in attracting the visiting friends and relatives and travelling caravanners to town.

"Cowra Tourism is delighted in the increase in both visitors and dollar spent in our Shire. It's a testament to the hard work and enthusiasm of our local businesses, hoteliers, tour operators and community volunteers," Ms Virgo said.

"With the success of our current calendar of events, including the Christmas Night Markets and exciting new events such as the recently announced Harvest in the Park to look forward too, we anticipate these numbers will only get better and better."



CMCA welcome

Sir,

A huge welcome to the CMCA 2014 rally at Robinvale. At the time of writing there was a registration of 850 motorhomes, with an estimated economic return to the local community of approximately \$2 million.

This rally gives the Chaffey Trail the opportunity to reach 1500-plus campervan and motorhome owners. It is generally accepted that these visitors stay in the region for an average of six weeks.

In partnership with Wentworth and Mildura Visitor Information Centre, a brochure has been designed to assist rally participants in visiting Mildura during and after the event.

Council staff will be on duty at the event throughout the week for sales, information and bookings.

Mildura Rural City Council project officer Julie Jewell has developed a very informative brochure, with a map detailing 'Long Vehicle Parking' requirements, dump points, emergency numbers, gas bottle re-fills, banking and ATM needs etc.

She will also be presenting a one hour segment at the Rally seminar on touring the Chaffey Trail to a possible audience of 1500 CMCA members.

A special rate has been arranged for city car parking at the corner of Langtree Avenue and 7th Street, at a flat rate of \$8 a day (as some use up to four spaces) 9am to 6pm. Signage will be developed to guide motorhome and campervan travellers to this car parking facility. Ade-

quate parking will also be made available at Chaffey Trail sites, including Psyche Pumps.

There are reports that CMCA visitors are already spending, and Buronga Cara-

van Park is reporting bookings.

**Cr Mark Eckel
Chairman, Chaffey Trail
Reference Group**



Town takes offence

Sir,
We have had an overwhelming response to your article Huge RV 'roadshow' comes to Robinvale (21/3/14).

The majority of residents in Merbein and surrounding district have taken offence that you have put in print that Merbein is a non-RV friendly town.

Some time back residents of Merbein pushed to make Merbein a RV friendly town, but council cowered to the whims of the minority who opposed it.

It was made apparent that the ones who were against it did not want RV's in sight of their property. It was also said they didn't want strangers lurking near children. Do they ever consider the so called strangers lurking, as they put it, at the local cricket games.

They never once considered the benefits Merbein would have gained bringing RV's to Merbein.

Although we are not an official RV friendly town, Merbein extends a warm welcome to all the members of the CMCA to spend time in and around Merbein. It is a friendly place and there is a lot to offer.

Mickey Bottrell,
for Committee and Members Merbein Progressive Group Inc. & Merbein Markets.

• EDITOR'S NOTE: The idea to make Merbein an RV friendly town came a few years ago from Alan 'Sandy' Cameron, supported by the Mildura Weekly, as indicated by full-page editorial pieces (ABOVE).

It was almost a done deal, but sadly (and strangely), a vocal minority, including a former councillor, had enough 'clout' to force council to reverse its decision. No-one pushed hard enough to re-

verse the reversal.

The end result is that Merbein doesn't get to display signs that says it is 'RV friendly.'

You can't have it both ways.





National rally

THE Australasian Touring Caravan Motorhome and Camping Club's national rally will be running for one week starting Tuesday, April 1 at Apex RiverBeach Holiday Park.

The event will include 55 caravan, motorhome and camping units with people travelling from across Australia for the rally.

The ATCMCC will also be celebrating their 15th birthday during the week.

More information is available by contacting 0428 501 006 or by visiting www.atcmcc.org.au.



Mandurah a place on the move

WA city tops list of Australian caravan registrations, with Albany coming fifth



PETER POAT

FIGURES

released recently by the Caravan, RV and Accommodation Industry of Australia show Mandurah has

Australia's highest combined number of caravan and campervan registrations per head of population, and Albany is not too far behind.

There were 4182 registrations in Mandurah, equating to 5.76 per cent of the State total.

The Queensland towns of Bundaberg, Toowoomba and the Fraser Coast follow Mandurah, with Albany in fifth place.

Precise tallies were not released for those towns.

Although Mandurah and Albany have high numbers of retirees, both cities are also recognised as popular holiday destinations, so it could be locals are prompted into caravan ownership by observing the thousands of caravanners

attracted to these cities each year.

Western Australia as a whole has the highest number of combined caravans and camper-trailer registrations with about 30 for every 1000 people.

There were 72,405 caravan/camper-trailers registered and 8127 campervans, representing a 6.5 per cent increase over the previous year.

The data in the survey accounted only for tallies up until the end of 2012 and although actual figures are not yet available for registrations since then, it is known there have been some significant increases.

At the time of the survey, Australia had reached 502,025 registered caravans and campervans, achieving the magic half-million mark for the first

time and representing an increase of nearly 6 per cent in 12 months.

Caravan numbers, which include camper-trailers, lead the way with 89 per cent of the tally.

Whereas the total of campervans and motorhomes in

Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania easily outstrip the caravan registrations, caravans lead the way in Queensland, Western and South Australia.

Probably because Victorians are renowned for heading north during the depths of winter, registrations in that State lead the nation, and amount to 28 per cent of national total, ahead of Queensland, then NSW and WA.

The survey found campervans were being retained for the longest period, with the average age of those registered being more than 16 years.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines caravans as "an enclosed trailer designed for human occupation while stationary" and campervans as "self-propelled motor vehicles containing an area for accommodation".

READER LETTER

I believe the current review of the WA Caravan and Camping Ground Act by the Government is dominated by the Caravan Industry Association of WA to the detriment of every person who enjoys camping.

Reliable sources tell me the CIAWA is appealing to every possible branch of government, screaming that its industry is under threat because of nature-based parks and most other forms of free or budget-priced camping.

I understand it is trying to force all RVs into caravan parks under possible new regulations and this is the most concerning issue.

The future of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's RV Friendly Town scheme is of major worry to me because my wife

Pamela and I started it. These facilities, and others similar, are now under threat of being closed



under threat of being closed.

I urge all people interested in camping freedom to contact their local member of parliament as this is really your fight and requires you to express your concerns.

RVs do not pose a threat to caravan parks, in fact, they result in patronage increases because people stay longer in the area, if they are encouraged to do so and then there is the need to frequently visit caravan parks for all sorts of reasons.

I believe the threat, if implemented, will take several hundred million dollars each year out of the WA economy, because Eastern States RV owners won't come here.
Phil Chadd (former WA representative CMCA)



Caravan sales have reached a new level in Australia.



Campervans and motorhomes are most popular in the Eastern States, where virtually all building takes place. Pictures: Peter Poa



Aussies just love their vans

BY KARL CONDON

THERE are now more than half a million registered caravanning and camping products in Australia, according to figures released by the Caravan, RV and Accommodation Industry of Australia.

As the Australian car making and component manufacture industries begin a downward spiral towards eventual closure, a report on the RV industry shows an upward trend with combined registration of RVs reaching 505,025, many of them made in Australia. And Queensland figures are prominent in this increasing market.

The CRVA is the national peak body for the Australian caravan and holiday parks sector and also the caravan, motorhome, camper trailer, tent trailer, camping, cabins, other RV's and industry suppliers. The Caravan and Campervan Data Report produced by BDO continues to show the strength of the Australian caravan and camping industry, according to the CRVA.

Chief executive Stuart Lamont said: "Caravanning holidays continue to grow in popularity as families, baby boomers and older Australians increasingly choose to explore the country by road. This is

reflected in these new registration figures." Mr Lamont said caravanning and camping remained the quintessential Australian holiday, providing escape from everyday life at some of our most spectacular locations.

Findings of the report include: Caravan registrations increased 5.96 per cent, the highest recorded against other vehicle types. Caravans continue to represent 89 per cent of total registrations with campervans totalling 11 per cent. Queensland has the highest percentage of campervan registrations and Victoria the largest fleet of caravans. Western Australia has

the highest combined caravan and campervan registrations per head of population at 29.8 per 1000. Tasmania continues to have more than twice as many registered campervans per head of population than any of the mainland states.

The average age of Australian campervans is 17.6 years, with all states except Western Australia and South Australia showing a decrease in average age over the past five years. Camper trailers continue to make up the greatest number of caravan registrations by far, although there is a growing trend towards caravans in the 1.6-3 tonne range, reflecting the popularity of family vans.