



# A home away from home for RVs

Echuca-Moama businessman Peter Hill (pictured) hopes to develop Echuca's first RV park.

Plans for the 16-site park are in the hands of Campaspe Shire council, who is expected to review it in coming weeks.

Mr Hill said the development would capitalise on the increasing number of RVs on the road and self-funded retirees travelling through the district.

"This facility would cater just for that market . . . that's the tourism market we want to capture," he said.

Mr Hill said the 0.8 hectare block, which he owns, was the only large freehold site in central Victoria, was 300m from the town centre and included 100m of Campaspe River frontage, making it an ideal location for a security-gated park, exclusive for RVs.

"It would be short-stay accommodation for grey nomads. No camping or caravans," he said.

Mr Hill said it would be a win for the local economy, with visitors expected to stay between two to three nights.

"This not only supports tourism and accommodation initiatives in the area, but a much broader range of local businesses and services being so close to Echuca's major tourist attractions, retail outlets,



restaurants, hotels and other services," he said.

"With more than \$15 million being spent by the Federal Government over the past four years to promote the port, this links in well with that."

He said the park, which also

includes an amenities block, Wifi and power and water connections, could even be managed by Echuca-Moama Tourism.

"EMT can co-ordinate the bookings for a percentage of takings and promote the facility through EMT as the RV park will

be a financial member of EMT," he said.

Once the development, which includes a flood response plan, was approved, Mr Hill said it could be up and running within four months.

— Ivy Wise



## Motorhomes and wineries combine for a cosy visit

**L**ake Breeze Wines in Langhorne Creek has joined the Winery Haven Program. The winery will welcome tourists in motorhomes to stay at the winery as part of the Winery Haven initiative.

Rental vehical operator Maui motorhomes, created the opportunity for tourists to explore some of the state's best wineries. For one night only, customers can stay in their motorhome at Lake Breeze Wines and recieve a gourmet hamper and a bottle of wine.

Tourism minister Leon Bignell said the initiative is a great way for domestic and international tourists to travel the state.

"After a day of touring, visitors can pull up at one of the wineries, do a tasting and then have the luxury of settling in for the night in the comfort and style of their motorhome," Mr Bignell said.

Other wineries that have joined the event are Caudo Wines in Cadell, Hahndorf Hills Wines in the Hahndorf and Rymill winery in Coonawarra.



## Proposal to make town RV friendly

Wellington is looking at moves to become a Recreational Vehicle friendly town in line with many others in Australia.

Cr Pip Smith moved a motion which was seconded by Cr David Grant which will look at how in some way benefits can be driven by promoting Wellington.

“I went down to a caravan and camping meeting and I think it would be good to see how we could improve the free camping situation,” she said.

“Things like improving our town entrances with maps, place where RV and caravans can park.

“I think we should become a RV friendly town, they do want to come to Wellington and in preference to bigger places like Orange and Dubbo,” she told fellow councillors.

Deputy mayor Cr David Grant said it would be a definite plus for the local government area.

It is something we’ve been looking at and let’s talk about pursuing some of the good points of it,” he said.

Mayor Cr Rod Buhr said Wellington could do things which would make it easier for the RV community to embrace the LGA.



# Caudo: winery haven for motorhomes

A RIVERLAND winery is among just four statewide taking part in a new initiative that enables motorhomes to base themselves at wineries.

Cadell's Caudo Wines is part of Winery Havens, which Tourism Minister Leon Bignell described as "the perfect experience for travellers who love food and wine".

"This is a great new way for domestic and overseas travellers to explore the state," he said.

The initiative was created by rental vehicle operator Maui Motorhomes.

"Customers can park their motorhome and stay overnight at selected wineries with a spectacular outlook

across the vines," Mr Bignell said.

"After a day of touring, visitors can pull up at one of the wineries, do a tasting and then have the luxury of settling in for the night in the comfort and style of their motorhome."

The cost is \$140 per couple and the package includes an overnight site to park the motorhome (one night only) at the vineyard, a local hamper filled with gourmet produce and a bottle of the vineyard's wine.

"This is a winery and accommodation experience like no other – and visitors might even be lucky enough to meet the winemaker during their stay," Mr Bignell added.



## Freedom campers not freeloaders

This month's HT is a 'John' edition - with three features - a soccer fan, agronomist and artist, all John. You will have your share of animals too - lemurs, dogs and cane toads.

There is an extra page of Creative Cuts this month, as there is so much going on, plus an update on the Precinct, the Sunshine Coast Show and A Village Wedding Expo.

We take you from Madagascar to Carnarvon Gorge, and I enjoyed reporting on our local showgrounds and how they open up a different sector of the tourism market.

Two years ago Heatley and I spent three joyous months discovering our wondrous country. Clutching my *Camp 7* book we spent some beautiful nights out bush. Our first "free camp" was Mulga Well Rest Area, 225km south of Coober Pedy.

We found a spot not too close (but not too away) from the other travellers and were invited to share hot chocolates by their campfire. As we watched the biggest moon I had ever seen surface, I ventured, "Do you often freecamp?"

Very quickly I was nicely told, "Freedom camping, that's what we prefer to call it."

Our night finished with a friendly bus of revelling footballers on their way back to Woomera. Thankfully they stayed only briefly, but our quest to enjoy little outback destinations has remained. It gave our family a totally different experience to the caravan parks - in both we experienced the same camaraderie every day.

The Hinterland taps into that market, giving people in self-contained vehicles freedom of choice in where they stay. But

RV Friendly Towns are sparse on the coast - the closest is Eumundi, then Gympie. It is a real opportunity for tourism that the Hinterland is yet to grasp, but also for travellers to enjoy our region.

Does it sound like I want to be on the road again? Hmm.. (It is better than thinking about Queensland employees forced to join organisations and rising vehicle registrations!)

Lastly, congratulations to all the organisers, volunteers and competitors at the Maleny Show - we have a few photos inside for you.

Until next month,  
**Michelle Gilmore**  
editor@hinterlandtimes.com.au





## ‘Freedom campers’ pay our way

AS A “Freedom Camper” I find Ms Espitalier’s letter (Adv., May 30) quite offensive.

Having worked, paid taxes and superannuation for more than 45 years, I am now a self-funded retiree who, like numerous other retirees, have never (ever) been the recipient of welfare, but enjoy the freedom of being a “Grey Nomad” and frequently choose to free-camp.

Many of us with self-contained caravans, motorhomes or campervans choose to spend about 30 per cent of our time in caravan parks but \$30-\$40 a night for a power point and a shower is much too expensive.

We intentionally avoid TV or games rooms, swimming pools and

even camp kitchens and by free camping, we stay longer and therefore spend more visiting local attractions, buying food, fuel and souvenirs.

In a recently sighted article, a caravan owners club had about 400 members rally in the Longreach, Queensland drought-affected area.

In just one week, they injected \$250,000 into the local community.

Reading between the lines, it appears Ms Espitalier’s market research may have been inadequate!

**LEIGH CLARK**  
**Burnie**



# Big cars are welcome here

## *Projects at our tourism and arts centre have begun*

MAJOR projects will support a strong contingent of caravan and motor-home travellers visiting Port Pirie.

Work began this week on upgrading the car park of the Port Pirie Regional Tourism and Arts Centre, in Mary Elie Street.

The project will beautify the front exterior of the Centre, repair drainage issues and provide extra daytime parking for caravans and recreational-vehicle travellers.

This is a continuation of

other major capital works projects at the centre in 2014-15 including the installation of new automatic sliding front doors and a new shelter next to the car park.

Port Pirie Regional Council has already performed preliminary works to improve the drainage in the front carpark.

More works will see "drive-through" parking spots created to accommodate caravans and motor-homes, in addition to the existing bus-caravan parking bay.

These spaces have been designed to provide a comfortable turning circle for big recreational-vehicles without impacting on cars parked in the area.

The carpark will be closed for about two weeks to allow for the work.

A spokeswoman said that cooperation and understanding from visitors to the centre would be greatly appreciated and that parking will be available in the library car park with access from Wandearah Road.



# Shire to create free site for RV travellers

**Sophie Clapin**

The Shire of Katanning is on the right track to becoming an RV-friendly town by implementing a free short-term camping site and dump point for visitors.

After receiving a number of requests from the community to provide a facility to support the town's development and additional tourism, the Shire will implement the 24-hour RV rest point along a rerouted section of Albion Street.

It will allow visitors to be close to the centre of town, provide appropriate parking and allow the dump facility to be connected

directly to the existing sewer system.

According to the 2014 Caravan and Campervan Data Report released last week, campervan registrations have increased by 5.3 per cent, with a total of 556,844 registered in Australia.

Acting Shire chief executive Andrew Holden said with the upcoming Caravan and Camper rally to Albany in October it was important for the sites and signage to be completed before then.

"The Shire has been thinking about this for some time, and we want everything in place so people can access the facilities

with little inconvenience," he said. "Without the signs and facilities we don't stand out as an RV-friendly town, it is a perception and this will encourage visitors and those passing through."

Currently the Shire offers travellers facilities within the caravan park premises at a small cost, but one of the requirements to becoming an RV-friendly town is to have a publicly available and accessible point free of charge.

To deliver the requirements, \$5000 of the budget will be used.

The sites are being assessed and construction is set to begin in July.



# Would you pay \$34 for a hotel bed in back of a van?

## EXCLUSIVE

LINDA SILMALIS  
REBECCA GREDDLEY

THE sleeping space might be a bit cramped, the showers are open-air and you can only use the loos during business hours.

On the up side, there is a world-famous surf beach on the doorstep, restaurants and coffee shops within metres and plenty of night-time entertainment.

Welcome to campervan-surfing, a new accommodation option for cash-poor travellers willing to forgo a few luxuries in exchange for a cheap bed in the back of a van.

Costing less than a budget hotel and marginally more private than a hostel, campervan-owners are capitalising on the demand for budget accommodation in Sydney by renting out beds in the back of curtained vans parked in coveted coastal locations.

One listing by Airbnb subscriber Paul was charging \$34

per person for three people a night to stay in the back of a "high ceiling" campervan parked "one block from Bondi Beach".

Furnished with curtains to offer both "privacy and shade", the van was also located within walking distance of public showers.

"Toilets and showers are at the beach, toilets are also in local pubs, restaurants and

cafes, which are all at your doorstep," he said.

"Curtains provide both privacy and shade. Sleeps one, two or three people.

"Extremely close to the beach. It's a large campervan that is hibernating for the winter. Keep it warm."

The listing said "guests" would have access to a key together with full access to the campervan, although it could not be driven.

Guests could also stay longer than a week if required, with Paul checking in "once in a while" to ensure "everything is going okay".

While it said the van would be "parked for a long time" to allow guests to "hire it as a place to live for a while", a \$104 Waverley Council parking fine had

been placed on the wind-screen for breaching a two-hour parking limit.

The option has proved popular among travellers, with the van booked out last week except for Wednesday night.

For an inner-city experience, Airbnb also listed another campervan parked in Glebe.

For travellers who already have their own campervan but need somewhere to cook, Airbnb also includes listings for private "kitchens" where

guests can access someone's cooking facilities for a small fee.

A Waverley Council spokesman said the council

was investigating making kerbside camping illegal.

The council has waged an ongoing battle with travellers camping in streets, with signs banning the practice in popular streets.

"We welcome visitors to our beautiful beaches and parks but camping in Waverley streets is absolutely inappropriate," he said.

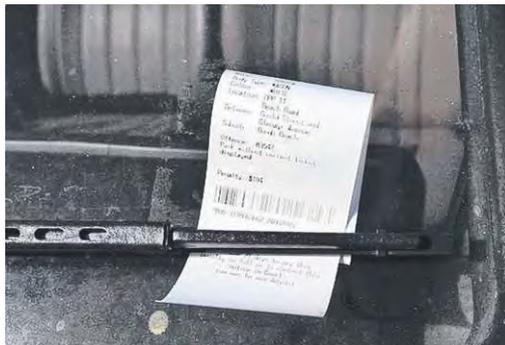
Michaela Shaw, 23, from the UK, said she would never consider staying in a van.

A staff member from The Bondi Backpacker said it was possible to book a share room for \$22 at the hostel.

"It baffles me, it's absolutely ridiculous," she said.

Backpacker Rebecca Wells, 21, also from the UK, said hostel accommodation was just as affordable.

"I've known of backpackers who hire vehicles and drive the east coast, but this is homeless style," she said.



It did cop a parking fine worse than a minibar bill.

