



Ramblers to 'Go Troppo' at Brooms!

Welcome back to a new year of fun and friendship to members of Clarence Valley Ramblers Motorhome Club!

Hopefully you have all had a wonderful Christmas/New Year break and are looking forward to our first outing for 2015 to Brooms Head.

A reminder to all that this outing will be held the second weekend of February (13-15) not the first weekend as we normally do.

And what an outing it will be as we celebrate the Club's 17th birthday!

The theme for the weekend will be 'Go Troppo' which is sure to bring out the creative juices

of members and ensure some very exotic and 'interesting' costumes!

Friday will be setting-up and

catching up with friends and sharing tales of what exciting activities they had over the break.

Friday evening, for those who would like to, we will stroll up to the Brooms Head Bowling Club to enjoy a Chinese meal and join in the raffles.

Lots of fun and games will be had throughout the day on Saturday as well as the preparations for our birthday party that night.

What a colourful and vibrant party that is sure to be as everyone gets into the 'Go Troppo' theme and mood! The Club will be providing the prawns & chicken with members bringing along either a salad or a sweet. Please advise Carol what you will be bringing as we don't want to have too many salads and not enough sweets (or vice versa!)

The very important ceremonial cutting of the birthday cake

will be held at 10am on Sunday.

If you are reading this article and are planning to purchase an RV and would like to have more information and advice; would like to know more about your local Chapter; or would like to have more information on the biggest RV Club in Australia, the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA), then we invite you to call in and talk to us over the weekend at the Brooms Head Caravan Park.

If you are already a CMCA member and would like to join us for the weekend, please ring Clarence Valley Ramblers Motorhome Club secretary, Carol, on 6645 1717. New members, and visitors, are always made very welcome.

Patricia Kan



Rally a benefit to the region

THE Hidden Treasures of the Great Southern, in partnership with the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) and other guest speakers, will be hosting a regional briefing on Monday about the upcoming CMCA National Rally.

The National Rally will take place in Albany in October this year and the briefing will be held at the Gnowangerup Community Resource Centre on February 2.

The CMCA is a not-for-profit organisation and the largest recreational vehicle (RV) club in Australia with around 65,000 members.

The National Rally event typically attracts in excess of 1,000 RVs to a destination.

Hidden Treasures of the Great Southern chairperson Di Holly said it was expected to provide a significant tourist influx

to the region.

“It is anticipated that many visitors will extend their stay in the region beyond the period of the rally providing an opportunity to experience some of our region’s hidden treasures,” she said.

“With the influx of visitors over this period there is an opportunity for our communities to benefit, particularly with visitors attending Bloom Festival events running from mid-September to mid-October.”

The CMCA regional briefing on February 2 will provide shires, community groups, businesses and individuals with information on a range of aspects of the National Rally.

This will include an overview of the event, estimated visitors numbers, demographics and travel patterns and suggestions on the potential opportunities for communities.

Lowood an RV friendly place

Addition to CMCA list a welcome boost: Lehmann

LOWOOD is now one of two nationally recognised RV Friendly Towns in the Somerset Regional Council region.

Kilcoy was the first to receive recognition from the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) as an RV Friendly Town and now, after a few improvements by the council, Lowood is on the list.

Self-contained motorhomes, campervans and caravans are permitted to stay for short and long term overnight parking (seven days) at the Lowood Showgrounds on Station St.

The showgrounds is equipped with a free public dump point and potable water.

Somerset Regional Council mayor Graeme Lehmann said the recognition of Lowood as an RV Friendly Town was a

welcome boost for the region.

“Not only will this attract more tourists coming to this beautiful town, it will help boost the local economy and our small business owners,” Cr Lehmann said.

“Council is committed to attracting more tourists to Somerset and getting our towns recognised across the country as RV Friendly townships is a huge,

positive step forward.

“All our Somerset towns welcome RV travellers and most provide wide streets, free parking and shady parks to stop and refresh but we now have two major townships that meet all the requirements of a nationally recognised RV Friendly Town.”

The Lowood Show Society manages the showgrounds with the assistance of caretaker David Wyman.

President Noel Kammholz

said the news was fantastic.

“We have quite a few people who use the facilities at the showgrounds to stay for up to a week and they enjoy it because of the amenities on offer, the peacefulness of the location and the picturesque backdrop,” Mr Kammholz said.

“A lot of the people who stay here also enjoy shopping in town because they comment that you can get a lot of unique things from in town that you can’t buy elsewhere.

“It’s a great step for tourism and will certainly help with attracting more people to Lowood.”

Street parking along Railway St, Lowood, is now permitted for RVs.

Signs will be installed at the main entrances to the township to inform people

that the town is nationally recognised as RV Friendly.



WELCOME ABOARD: Lowood Showgrounds caretaker David Wyman, Somerset Regional Council Mayor Graeme Lehmann and Lowood Show Society president Noel Kammholz are delighted with the news that Lowood is now an RV Friendly town

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



Corral big cash cow

RV and caravan owners contributed \$43 500 into the Kyabram economy during the recent RV and Country Music Corral.

That is according to a Campaspe Shire survey based on the number of RVs that attended the festival in November.

Other interesting results from the survey of 39 people included:

- 100 per cent said they would return for the next event,
- 90 per cent were from outside Campaspe Shire and Murray Shire;
- 94 per cent came to Kyabram specifically for the event;
- 97 per cent shopped locally;
- 69 per cent ate out;
- 14 per cent went general sight seeing;
- 70 per cent of respondents heard about the festival by word of mouth.

When the shire's survey results were combined with information taken from 69 festival feedback forms, it was found that 49 per cent of

respondents were first time attendees.

Most (74 per cent) of those surveyed came from across Victoria to be at the event.

Secretary Dossie Grills said the survey results reinforced the festival's benefits to Kyabram and vindicated the hard work of the small committee of 11 and their helpers.

"It's going from strength to strength," Mrs Grills said.

"And we're really proud of our volunteers who work hard for the community."

Mrs Grills said 174 individual RV and caravan owners, up by about 20 on the previous year, descended on the showgrounds for the weekend of country music and entertainment.

Plans are already being made for the next event on November 7 and 8.

Gates will open for seven days from November 3 and the Saturday entertainment will run non-stop from noon.

At the group's recent annual meeting, Allan Weeks was re-elected president, Mrs Grills secretary and John Veenstra treasurer.



Unhappy campers

We decided to spend the Australia Day weekend in our campervan in your town this year, having seen some pictures on the web.

Loxton advertises itself as “RV friendly” and on Wednesday and Thursday this was the case, but hell arrived on Friday, with the loudest racket coming from a nearby business until the early hours of the morning.

Later in the night, young people continued to party at the showgrounds, even urinating on our car trailer.

Your town should feel disgusted.

I will be recommending to the RV Victoria Club that Loxton be bypassed and removed from the RV recommended sites.

Most RV people are retirees and the last thing they want is this loud racket all night.

You are not an RV friendly town and the notice saying such should be removed.

We continued on to Berri as Loxton supermarket staff told us there is a good site at Martin’s Bend.

Name and address supplied



RV growth validates dump site

NICK BIELBY

There has been an increase in caravans and motorhomes on the state's roads recently, which validates Maitland City Council's decision to install a waste dump facility for the recreational vehicles and their owners in the city.

That's the opinion of Maitland councillor and caravan enthusiast Steve Proctor, who was buoyed by council's decision late last year to install an official waste dump point for caravans and motorhomes at Harold Gregson Reserve.

The Caravan Industry Association of Australia released new statistics this

month that showed caravan and recreational vehicle production across the nation had increased by almost 5 per cent in the past year.

The figures also showed that recreational vehicle registrations had increased by almost 22 per cent since 2008.

Cr Proctor said he had seen these statistics reflected in his travels.

"A few years ago if you wanted to go on a trip you just went, but now you have to book," he said.

"It's an affordable holiday and you can go at your own pace."

A Maitland council spokesman said preliminary design work, installation and associated signage for the dump point would begin this financial year.

"Further works including formalisation of the existing car park area and

improvements to the existing toilet facilities are listed for consideration in the 2015-16 Capital Works Program," he said.

The facility will mean caravan and recreational vehicle tourists can stay at the reserve, near Maitland No.1 Sports Ground, for up to 72 hours free of charge.

Cr Proctor said encouraging caravan and motorhome tourism would have a positive flow-on effect for local attractions such as Maitland Regional Art Gallery and Walka Water Works.

"The short weekend events like the Aroma coffee and chocolate festival would be ideal [attractions] and Morpeth would be popular," he said.

"There is also an accommodation and bed shortage in Maitland.

"Caravans and motorhomes are self contained. All they need is somewhere to park."

Council has earmarked \$80,000 to complete the dump point and associated work in the 2015-16 financial year.

Picnic tables and toilet upgrades at the site could also be part of the project.



Cr Steve Proctor



Campervan cash to roll in

Shannon Hampton

The wider Great Southern region is expected to cash in on the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's national rally, to be hosted in Albany this year, with organisers expecting an injection of more than \$3 million into the region.

An information session was held in Gnowangerup on Monday, where community members and stakeholders from Great Southern shires were briefed on the expected benefits for the region. About 1000 vehicles carrying 1800 members are expected to make their way through the region on their journey to Albany in October.

Rally manager Vince Calleja, who hosted the briefing, said communities like Gnowangerup, Cranbrook, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe and Williams would consider how they could capitalise on pre-rally and post-rally arrivals.

"Once the rally members start coming through the region, there's all sorts of things they can be offered like tours, merchandising and experiences," he said.

Shire of Cranbrook economic and community development manager Cassandra Stipanicev said the Shire hoped to link the event with the Hidden Treasures Bloom Festival, also held in October.

"Having this many people, who from a Hidden Treasures point of

view is our target market, will be very beneficial," she said.

Ms Stipanicev said Cranbrook would host vans for four days before the main event in Albany and was planning a number of events.

She said representatives from the Shire of Cranbrook would travel to Murray Bridge in South Australia in April to promote the region at the CMCA's 29th anniversary rally.

"From a regional perspective, and a WA perspective, it is a fantastic event," she said.

Great Southern Development chairman Peter Rundle said the CMCA national rally had potential to generate significant economic benefits for the broader Great Southern.

"Due to the nature of the RV market, the economic benefits to the region should continue to be felt in the local economy throughout the year through repeat visitation and word-of-mouth," he said.

Tell us what you think. Email news@greatsouthernherald.com.au or send us a letter.



Town's visitor influx

MANILLA businesses are expecting an economic boost when an influx of grey nomads descends on the town next month.

More than 100 caravans are expected to roll into the Manilla Showground for the NSW Association of Caravan Clubs' state rally from March 20 to 22.

Manilla Fruit and Veg co-owner Sonya Sevil said she was excited about the rally and expected visitors would get a kick out of all the sights and sounds of Manilla.

Mrs Sevil said often caravanners were retirees who would enjoy lovely walks by the river and observing hang-gliders from Mt Borah.

She said travellers often liked to sample local produce and she hoped her business would sell a lot of cheeses, olive oils, jams, fruits and baked goods produced in the region.

Mrs Sevil said a string of caravanners already in town had prompted the store to start making takeaway coffees on demand.

Last year's rally, which was held in Bathurst, saw 120 caravanners inject roughly \$60,000 into

the community.

Tamworth mayor Col Murray said he was thrilled the event would be hosted in Manilla.

"Studies have shown that caravan and recreational vehicle travellers typically spend more than \$100 a day in a community," Cr Murray said.

WestWHEELS CARAVANS, CAMPING

Pack confidence when caravanning overseas

With many avenues to help, there's no need for concern



PETER POAT

I AM often asked about caravanning and motorhoming in overseas countries and any difficulties or obstacles these ventures may present.

While some may feel it could be a major task and tricky to organise, that's not necessarily the case and it is growing in popularity with many Australians.

Good planning is the main ingredient for undertaking such ventures in unfamiliar countries.

It is particularly attractive to those who have experience with RVs in Australia, because they have much of the awareness and knowhow associated with this mode of travel.

However, this is not to say it is beyond those who haven't had similar experience at home.

Some also feel left-hand drive in many countries is problematic but most will adapt very easily.

Although there are those who prefer caravans over motorhomes, it is a much easier proposition to hire a motorhome than having to hire a tow vehicle plus a caravan. However, some will prefer to do it that way and it can be done.

A reader I spoke to recently wasn't so concerned about hiring the RV; his main unease was knowing the locations and details

of caravan parks and camping spots in foreign countries in order to do some forward planning.

He and his wife are regular caravanners in Australia and had been planning an extended trip through Europe but hesitated at the prospect of challenging the unknown, such as language barriers.

If this is your idea of an overseas adventure there's no reason to feel anxious.

There is an overabundance of options and travel information available via the internet as well as printed guides for most countries around the world.

In two trips to Europe in the last couple of years, I discovered just how popular RV holidays were with both locals and international tourists. The same applies in the US.

Rental firm Motorhome International has links to hiring outlets in Europe, the US, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and arrangements and bookings can be made before you leave home.

Another organisation which will make trip planning a simple task is Suncamp Holidays. The Dutch company has been in business for 45 years and has more than 600 campsites in 16 European countries. With this organisation

you can choose your site in advance on the internet at any time of the day or night.

Do it before you leave home or via internet on a laptop, iPhone or iPad as you travel. Its website is brilliant, each park is featured separately with comprehensive details and an array of photos with many having short videos, giving you an appreciation of the surrounds and the facilities.

On a recent river trip from Amsterdam to Budapest I saw dozens of camping grounds dotted along the banks of the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers in some of Europe's most spectacular landscapes.

In England, one of the best starting points is the Camping and Caravan Club. It is a big organisation with access to more than 200 caravan parks of its own.

One of the bonuses is the club will help if you need travel advice, suffer a technical problem or face most other situations which may confront you. It has 50 technical leaflets available free to members (open to international visitors) and offers insurance, breakdown cover and car hire at special rates.

To assist with pre-trip planning, a number of good books are available. Abe Books has titles such as Caravanning and Camping Europe, Europe by Van,

RV and Car Camping in Europe,
and Take Your RV to Europe for
Long Term Touring.

Some good sites to visit include
motorhome-international.com (for
motorhome hire), suncamp.co.uk/
(camp grounds), abebooks.com
(type caravanning and camping
into keyword) and
campingandcaravanclub.co.uk
(camp grounds and membership).



A caravan park in a picturesque spot alongside the Rhine River, Rudesheim, Germany. Picture: Peter Poat



Illegal campfires discovered at Southern 80 **CAMPERS WARNED**

BY RENEE THOMPSON

LEGISLATION that allows campfires along the Victorian side of the Murray River could be reviewed following a number of illegal campfires found during this year's Southern 80 ski race near Echuca, Parks Victoria has warned.

The stern warning was issued yesterday by Parks Victoria ranger in charge of fire and emergencies for the northern rivers district, Brooke Ryan.

Ms Ryan said unlike the NSW side of the river where the lighting of campfires was prohibited, campers on the Victorian side of the Murray enjoyed the freedom to light campfires on non-Total Fire Ban days, subject to restrictions.

But those who camped by the river needed to remember it was a privilege that could be revoked in

future should campers continue to disrespect those guidelines, Ms Ryan said.

"The message needs to be reiterated; it's a privilege to be able to have a campfire on the Victorian side of Murray River," she said. "If people don't respect fire prescriptions, we will have to look at reviewing the current fire legislation which allows campfires along the river."

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It's a privilege to be able to have a campfire on the Victorian side of Murray River.

Brooke Ryan



POPULAR: Each year The Southern 80 Ski Race on the Murray River at Echuca attracts many campers.

File picture: JULIE HOUGH

Campfires warning issued

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Ms Ryan said at least five illegal campfires were discovered along the river near Echuca by fire authorities yesterday, a day of Total Fire Ban in the north and north east of the state.

"Which is a real concern given the significant risk it posed to the public who were out in large numbers on the river this weekend due to the Southern 80," she said.

She said one "significant campfire" discovered at Braund Road was in the vicinity of 6m by 2m, well above the legal size requirements.

"So not only does it not meet campfire prescriptions, it's a Total Fire Ban day," she said.

"It took a slip on and a

tanker in excess of an hour to extinguish the fire."

She said the campfire had the potential to turn into a "significant fire" with the afternoon's forecast wind had it not been discovered by authorities.

Ms Ryan said those responsible had been interviewed by police and there was a "high probability of them having to attend court".

"It's a serious offence, I don't think people understand the risk of having a fire on days of Total Fire Ban, but also they might not understand the consequences," she said.

Ms Ryan said Parks Victoria and Victoria Police had conducted a joint compliance operation and praised those

who had called authorities with information about bad behaviour.

"It's brilliant and we want it to continue," she said.

— **RENEE THOMPSON**



The message is clear.