



# RVs welcomed to Geelong

BY JAMES TAYLOR

RECREATIONAL vehicles (RV) are a hot topic in the region, with the City of Greater Geelong declared the state's first RV-friendly council and the Surf Coast Shire asking for more time on a RV plan for Winchelsea.

Last week, Tourism Greater Geelong and the Bellarine executive director Roger Grant said the city was well placed to embrace the Victorian Caravan Parks Association's (VicParks) "Community Welcomes Recreational Vehicles" program.

The national program highlights towns, destinations and regions that actively encourage RV travellers to visit them.

"Our region attracts more than five million visitors annually and we are well supported with numerous holiday parks of outstanding quality," Mr Grant said.

VicParks chief executive officer Elizabeth White said the RV market was booming in Australia and the program would allow local councils to capitalise on this growth while offering a better travel experience for consumers.

Meanwhile, the Surf Coast Shire has again deferred considering a motion about a proposed RV-friendly parking area in Winchelsea.

The motion notes the mixed community feedback so far to the proposal, to be located at the corner of Barwon Terrace and Mercer Street, and suggests working with local businesses to create RV-friendly sites on private land.

Instead, councillors resolved at their meeting this month to defer the item until the February 23 meeting and to invite submissions to a council briefing in Winchelsea on February 2.

Cr Carol McGregor said the main issue the council was hearing so far was about the location of the RV-friendly site in Winchelsea.

Cr Heather Wellington said the council's continued deferral of the motion would be disappointing to Growing Winchelsea (which put forward the proposal), "but we do have to be comprehensive".

"As a council we will have to make a decision on this, and we will have to make a decision about which objectives are reasonable."



Elizabeth White and Roger Grant launch the "Community Welcomes Recreational Vehicles" campaign in the City of Greater Geelong.



# Moira seeks RV advice

MOIRA Shire is seeking community feedback on a draft recreational vehicle (RV) strategy that has been developed over 12 months of investigation and discussion by council's RV Friendly working group.

Moira Shire mayor Gary Cleveland said the draft RV strategy included more than 10 individual recommendations such as dump and water refill points and long-bay parking in towns.

A 12-month trial of free short-term camping at council's showgrounds in Cobram, Nathalia, Numurkah and Yarrawonga would need to take place.

RVs are largely self-sufficient – they do not need continuous access to toilets, showers, electricity, water or other services that are commonly associated with the more traditional caravan and camping accommodation.

Yarrawonga, Nathalia, Numurkah and Cobram are four of Victoria's 35 RV Friendly Towns which means the community welcomes and provides amenities to accommodate the needs of RV tourists, including parking, access to potable water and a free dump point.

Council plans to end the feedback period in February 2016.

Copies of the draft strategy are available from council's website and by calling or visiting council's visitor information centres and service centres.



# Town's amenities boost

PETER BANNAN

TRAVELLERS to Leitchville will benefit from the installation of a shower at toilet amenities near the town's Recreational Vehicle (RV) site.

The hot shower is located inside the disabled public toilet at the Leitchville Swimming Pool, available to tourists utilising the rest area and just in time for the busy holiday season.

The community had raised more than \$4000 for the shower, which is expected to be a welcome addition to the

RV Friendly Town classification, a title bestowed upon the town last July.

The project was also funded through community donations, the Canberra Caravan Club and the Gannawarra Shire Council.

Leitchville and District Progress Association member, Geoff Behrens said travellers requested the facility.

"We have been pushing for it since the toilet block was constructed for the public pool," he said.

"For most of these holidaymakers, the word travels through word of mouth,

magazines, blogs and online smartphone applications such as WikiCamps Australia.

"This will really cement Leitchville as the destination for visitors to stop over at, experience the bakery, enjoy a beer at the pub and make overnight purchases at the supermarket.

"We want people to divert off the highway and experience something of our community."

The RV site, which is maintained by community members, is located on Cohuna-Leitchville Road, adjacent to the public swimming pool.



**WATERSHED MOMENT:** Leitchville and District Progress Association treasurer, Roma Dye, left, and association member, Geoff Behrens inspect the new shower, installed near the well-established Recreational Vehicle site.



*Happy New Year everyone!*

# Free campers clog up reserve carpark

## Locals say council rangers unable to move people on

By Todd Connaughton

THE recurring problems caused by Christmas and New Year holidaymakers overnighting in their vehicles at the Crescent Head reserve carpark have arisen again – with many locals claiming the situation is the worst it's ever been.

A meeting has now been organised at the town's community hall, at which representatives from the council, the Highway Patrol and residents will discuss ways to tackle the problem – but it won't take place until January 13, a full 12 days away.

Meanwhile, recent days have dawned to find

□ **Continued page 2**

## Free campers clogging up carpark

□ From front page

more than 30 vans and cars occupying the car park, and locals and day visitors unable to find a parking space.

The 'free campers' are also said to be using the reserve as a toilet and rubbish tip.

Local people describe finding faeces, used toilet paper and tampons littering the area, and say the stench of urine at the foreshore reserve is "overpowering".

A post on a local social media site highlighting the problem has garnered a strong reaction, with more than 90 comments, and it has been shared more than 150 times.

Before Christmas, the council issued a lengthy statement detailing what its response to free campers would be over the long holiday.

"Over the Christmas period, with so many holiday makers keen to enjoy the great outdoors, Kempsey Council will endeavour to ensure the safety and protection of

residents and tourists across the Valley with council rangers taking a 'proactive' approach this holiday season," a spokesperson for the local authority said.

"As our rangers make the rounds across the Macleay, they will be ensuring our campers are safe, protected and setting up in camping sites with adequate amenities in suitably designated areas.

"Our rangers will encourage campers to utilise any of our local designated tourist facilities

and overnight camping areas, rather than rely on 'free' camping – they (the rangers) are often a wealth of knowledge when it comes to our local area.

"As we enjoy our leisure time across the Macleay Valley, all are encouraged to take care of our environment and camp in areas deemed suitable by Council ensuring the way of life that we enjoy is pro-

tected.

"Any residents or visitors who may have questions on where to camp safely and without penalty please phone Council's Customer Service Centre or via our after hours service on 6566 3200."

### Allowed

But many of the people who have posted comments on social media have described the inability of the council rangers, who have been patrolling the area, to force people to move on.

"A so-called 'camper' said he was fronted by a ranger but he was allowed to stay," reads one comment.

"His excuse being there was no room in the caravan park so he has set up a full camp site off the back of his campervan."

Other people reported similar interactions between people staying in the carpark and council rangers.

The public meeting to discuss the issue will start at 5.30pm next Wednesday week.



□ **Nearly full:** It's 5.30 in the morning on Tuesday and there aren't many spaces for day visitors and shoppers in the reserve carpark  
— from Facebook



# Are we RV friendly?

BY FIONA BLICK

**Moira Shire Council is seeking community feedback on a draft Recreational Vehicle (RV) strategy, which was recently released for public comment.**

This draft strategy was developed through more than 12 months of investigation and discussion by council's RV Friendly Working Group and includes more than ten individual recommendations.

At the December ordinary meeting Cr Brian Keenan, who moved the recommendation to release the draft strategy, said tourism was a significant part of council business.

"The birth of the baby boomers was a momentous occasion," Cr Keenan said.

"They have now finished their working lives and are becoming an industry in themselves.

"We must take advantage of this.

"The number of people on the road absolutely astounds me, it is a massive industry and we have to be in a position to say 'come and talk to us'."

Mayor Gary Cleveland said the draft strategy began from the basic principle that RVs were largely self sufficient.

"They do not need continuous access to toilets, showers, electricity, water or other services that are commonly associated with the more traditional caravan and camping accommodation," Cr Cleveland said.

"The draft strategy aims to build a shire-wide approach to being RV friendly.

"It expects that RV travellers who chose to stay longer will move into one of Moira's many caravan and camping parks.

"This draft strategy needs to balance the opportunities to grow local tourism with the interests of existing operators and the potential impact on our infrastructure.

"We look forward to hearing feedback from the local community, tourism sector and the RV community."

Cr Kevin Bourke said it was vital the draft strategy was released so the public could provide council with feedback.

"We need to be aware of the public's feelings and thoughts and we are putting this draft strategy out there for the community's response," he said.

Cr Marie Martin echoed Cr Bourke's sentiments.

"I hope people will take notice of this," Cr Martin said.

"Dump points and low cost overnight stays are two issues we need to take into account before we move forward."

Yarrowonga, Cobram, Nathalia and Nurmukah are four of Victoria's 35 'RV Friendly' certified towns which means the community welcomes and provides amenities to accommodate the needs of RV tourists, including parking, access to potable water and a free dump point.

Copies of the draft strategy are now available from Moira Shire's website [www.moira.vic.gov.au](http://www.moira.vic.gov.au) or by phoning 5871 9222 or visiting one of the council's Visitor Information Centres or Service Centres.



*The Recreational Vehicle industry is booming and Moira Shire wants to take advantage of it.*



# Travellers get warm welcome

By **RACHEL FERRETT**

LYNDHURST has been declared a RV Friendly Town by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA).

For a town to qualify for the program, it must successfully meet the needs of recreational vehicle travellers by providing access to the general shopping area, offering affordable overnight parking and access to potable water and a free dump point.

A town must also have a community and council that displays a positive attitude travellers would find welcoming.

Blayney Shire Council worked in partnership with the Lyndhurst community to assist Lyndhurst to qualify as an RV Friendly Town.

Mayor of Blayney Scott Ferguson has welcomed the new accreditation for Lyndhurst and said it would lead to great economic benefits for the town.

"We are pleased that Lyndhurst in the Blayney Shire has joined the ranks as

one of the friendliest towns for campervans and motorhomes in Australia," he said.

"The designation of Lyndhurst as an official RV Friendly Town will encourage all RV travellers to stop, shop and enjoy the events, local food and wine and warm hospitality we have to offer here."

Cr Ferguson encourages all Lyndhurst residents and business owners to be welcoming and helpful to any recreational vehicle travellers they come across to drive word-of-mouth advertising.

CMCA director, national consumer representative and government liaison Ken Kipping hopes that by identifying places that fall under the title of RV Friendly Town it will encourage the expansion of tourism-related infrastructure and services.

"It is great to see an increasing number of towns qualifying as RV Friendly," he said.

A current list of RV Friendly Towns can be found at [www.cmca.net.au](http://www.cmca.net.au).



## Welcome mat for recreational vehicles

LETTERS in the *Herald* have referred to Newcastle City Council's ban on recreational vehicles parking on the Stockton ballast before and during New Year's Eve.

Regardless of one's stance on the argument for/against using the whole ballast area, may I suggest that the city proper still does not have a recreational vehicle-friendly area for visitors to Newcastle.

That is, there is no place in or near the city that is "friendly" to recreational vehicles. No place to park or no information centre available for the thousands of "grey nomads" who could bring themselves and their trade to our city.

So here's a suggestion: Stockton *does* have an area that would be appropriate to set up a recreational vehicle-friendly information centre! Instead of downplaying access to our city, why not use the former petrol station

site, expand the parking area slightly and positively put Newcastle on the map?

Make a dedicated area using the former petrol station and a small area of the ballast into a recreational vehicle-friendly information centre.

Not another caravan park, not an overnight venue, but an information centre with an expanded parking lot located conveniently near to the shops, pubs and the ferry to town.

Perhaps our council could consider this.  
**Gerard Prietto, Stockton**



**MOBILE LIVING:** Stockton local Gerard Prietto reckons the former service station in the suburb could be turned into a recreational vehicle-friendly information centre.