



Getting the balance right

By Melissa Blewitt

Lachlan Shire Council (LSC) wants to ensure they get the right balance between protecting local caravan park businesses and encouraging travellers to utilise the free camping facilities at Gum Bend Lake.

Gumbend Lake is categorised as a "primitive camping ground" which means 50 days in any 12 month period is the maximum stay allowable, and there cannot be more than two campsites per hectare under Local Government Regulations. There are many occasions where this campsite limit is exceeded especially in holidays, LSC General Manager Robert Hunt said. He added the limit of three days has been

imposed in certain circumstances where the facilities were being abused.

"LSC tries to balance the needs of both local caravan park businesses and encouraging travellers to stay in the free camping grounds," he said.

"The three-day stay has only been enforced on a limited number of occasions to my knowledge and that was to get some undesirable tenants out that were abusing the facilities.

"It is a balancing act trying to protect caravan park businesses which must comply with a great deal of regulation at significant expense and at the same time encouraging travellers to stay at free camping grounds where they do have a positive impact on

the economy."

Mr Hunt acknowledged freedom campers spend a significant amount during their stays but believed compliance with Local Government Regulations was essential in this instance. There is a sign erected at Gum Bend Lake highlighting the rules that are to be followed.

It states "Bush camping is part of who we are at Lachlan. We warmly welcome and cater for all visitors including Freedom Campers. Gum Bend Lake is a manmade lake. Opened on 22 October 1988, Gum Bend Lake was a project to commemorate Australia's bicentenary and was jointly funded by the NSW Bicentennial Council, the people of Condobolin and the

Lachlan Shire Council.

"Gum Bend Lake is ideal for water skiing, canoeing and fishing and is also popular with bird watchers with the Lachlan River nearby. Caution is encouraged in undertaking these recreational pursuits.

"Facilities include picnic tables, free BBQ, playground, toilet and hot shower facilities and a large rest area to the east of the Lake to take a break and enjoy. Gum Bend Lake is a maximum three night stay area.

"Pets are welcome on leads everywhere other than on the bank and for safety purposes we have a no glass policy on the lake or on its banks. Please also adhere to the current NSW fire restrictions.

"Welcome and enjoy your stay."



Port Neill push for RV stop

BY JARRAD DELANEY

RESIDENTS within the Port Neill community are pushing for an RV (recreational vehicle) park to be established within the community as a way to attract more tourists.

Residents have argued an RV park would prompt more people to come into the town to stay and spend more money at local businesses.

Port Neill Progress Association member Rod Fraser helped instigate the push for an RV park and said the town ticked a lot of boxes for attracting RV drivers, but lacked an RV park.

"Port Neill's not got a lot of other things left except tourism," he said.

"If we can get RV drivers to stay in town for a couple nights it should support small businesses located in the town."

Mr Fraser said the RV park

would not be in opposition to the local caravan park, it would simply be a cheaper alternative for RV drivers, run by the progress association.

One area that has been proposed for the RV park is behind Byrnes Park, which was argued would provide protection from the south to south easterly winds that blow through.

The idea would be to have about 10 to 12 parking bays surrounded by native vegetation.

The issue of a Port Neill RV park was raised at the community information session about the Tumby Bay District Council's 2016/17 Draft Annual Business Plan held in the town on June 22.

The council has been working with the progress association about the potential of an RV park and have been looking at different options.

Tumby Bay mayor Sam Telfer said the council was behind an RV park being in Port Neill but it would depend on completing the relevant processes.

"It won't need to be a major budget allocation, it's just a process we need to go through," he said.

Mr Fraser said the progress association was happy to work with the council but hoped there wouldn't be delays.

"Progress is looking forward to working with Tumby Bay District Council to get this project done as soon as possible," he said.



Newcastle set to attract RV grey nomads

NEWCASTLE could soon become an RV friendly destination, with council voting to instigate the process for accreditation.

RV (recreational vehicle) travellers are estimated to spend \$100 a day while on the road, according to the Wickham-based Campervan

and Motorhome Club of Australia, but tend to bypass towns and cities where there are no facilities.

To become an RV friendly town or destination (the

criteria differs slightly), Newcastle needs to have at least one designated site for low-cost stays of up to 48

hours, preferably close to shops and amenities. It must also provide a dump point for emptying black and grey water tanks.

Greens councillor Michael Osborne, who put the motion to council, said Carrington, Stockton and Wallsend were all potential sites, subject to council evaluation.

Campervan and Motor-

home Club CEO Richard Barwick said accreditation would open up a new tourist market for Newcastle.

“When you provide a good location, it gives people the appetite to spend money,” he said.



WHEEL LIFE: Cr Michael Osborne, left, and RV owners Bob and Jenneth Kamrad, of Charlestown, survey a potential stopover site at Carrington. **Picture: Simone De Peak**



Three RV Friendly Towns in shire

PORTLAND is now an RV (Recreation Vehicle) Friendly Town.

The accreditation from the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia ensures safe and secure sites or self-sufficient motorhomes, campervans and caravans to stay overnight.

Heywood and Casterton have also been declared RV Friendly Towns.

The sites include:

- Portland – long term parking (72 hours) at Henty Park near the Cable Trams; short term parking at Lee Breakwater Rd (opposite the yacht club) and Hurd St near Hanlon Park.
- Heywood – long term parking (48 hours) at Hunter St near the dump point; short term parking at Cameron St near the playground.
- Casterton – long term parking (up to one month) at Ess Lagoon; short term parking at Murray St behind the supermarket.

Glenelg Shire mayor Max Oberlander said research showed that RV communities spend an average of \$100 per day whilst travelling, money that would be directed into supporting local retailers and food outlets, supporting local jobs for the community.



PARKING along the western side of Hurd St, adjacent to Hanlon Park, has been set aside for recreational vehicles as part of Portland becoming a RV Friendly Town.

Picture: ELLY HATELEY 160627eh02



Sites discussed

KEN JENKINS

TWO public areas within Kerang are being considered as possible sites for self-contained recreational vehicle camping.

The increasing popularity of recreational vehicle - or RV - friendly sites has led to discussions with two groups, shire strategic development director, Chris White has told council recently.

The RV sites at Leitchville and Cohuna are working very well, with plenty of positive comments recorded in the Gateway to Gannawarra Centre visitor book and in online feedback/comments, he said.

Mr White said that there is still a need to achieve a consensus around the RV market in Kerang and the relative merits of establishing a dedicated RV site.

"Discussions have been held with the Kerang Turf Club around using their facilities for RV camping - and this would also accord with the aspirations of the Alexandra Park Trustees," he said.

VicTrack and Grain Corp are also supportive of using along Wellington Street adjacent to the railway line. This area has previously been used by railway works gangs.

Council was told that the numbers of campers in the RV site adjacent to the Gunbower Creek at Cohuna have increased significantly since inception and the Leitchville continues to perform strongly.

The RV site at Reedy Lake, northwest of Kerang, is nearing completion and, although at the present time usage data for this site is not recorded, there have been positive comments about the location itself.

Statistics for the Cohuna site are showing an average of 6.8 campers per day (vehicles). Based on the research from the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia, expenditure of \$130 per day equates

to \$39,800 per month or \$478,600 per annum.

"It is a significant boost to the lo-

cal Cohuna economy," Mr White said.

"Plans are being developed to expand the current site and landscape the area, in conjunction with other community plans for adjoining areas, for example, working with Cohuna Lions to improve the adjacent parkland".

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Discussions have been held with Quambatook and Koondrook regarding RV accreditation and the development of RV sites. Quambatook has decided not to proceed with accreditation at this stage, but has capacity to cater for large RVs at the community caravan park.

Koondrook has been evaluating several sites for an RV site and dump point, and further work is required to identify a site which showcases Koondrook's tourism strengths, complements other investments and meets with Caravan Motorhome Club of Australia approval.



Gateway's tourism growth

THE Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre at Cohuna continues to be operating extremely well, Gannawarra Shire Council strategic development director, Chris White said.

He told council at its June meeting that visitor numbers had increased significantly during the past six months.

Compared with 2015, there have been significant increases in all months this year, including a 76 per cent increase in January and a 135 per cent increase in May.

"These increases are attributable to a variety of reasons but are primarily due to the enhanced awareness of Gateway among the travelling visitor market," Mr White said.

"The collation of statistics and data, for example, website hits, RV [recreation vehicle] nights, accommodation levels and visitor enquiries, has been improved and this is assisting in strategic decision making."

Mr White said that the provision of RV-friendly facilities is seeing towns recognised as ideal stopping places and rest areas through word of mouth and exposure via Wiki Camps and electronic media. The overall increase in visitor numbers is also mirrored by increases in RV camping, accommodation statistics and website hits.

New office works are under way at Gateway, which will provide a larger dedicated workspace for staff and volunteers resulting in greater efficiencies and work output.

This space will also provide the opportunity for the tourism officer and other council staff to be based periodically at Gateway, providing an enhanced range of services to the community and visitors.

The internal displays have recently been upgraded and a variety of new marketing materials developed.

Mr White said that these include

a new touring map, events guide, forest and wetland promotions board, dairy promotions board, new flags and banners and an expansion of the local products. Recently, Gateway has assisted with marketing and promotion of the Show and Shine at Kerang.

"And regular contact is made

with groups such as hiking clubs and mountain bike clubs and any outdoor recreation groups," he said.

Mr White said that current data clearly shows the sustained success of Gateway and also highlights the growing strength of the tourism market across the shire.



PROMOTION: Visitors receive information at the Gateway to Gannawarra Visitor Centre at Cohuna.