



Briefly

Review of rest areas

THE Lions Park Penguin will no longer be available as a 48-hour rest area for recreational vehicles. The council recently reviewed its policy on overnight rest areas. It gave approval for campervan and motorhome owners to rest for up to 48 hours in any other rest areas within the municipality. Also, appropriate steps have been taken to limit the space available at the Forth Recreation Ground for overnight stays. Signage will be erected at Lions Park, Penguin which will identify the area for day use only.



Council scraps year-long RV trial after disappointing figures flow in

COFFS Harbour City Council has abandoned a 12-month trial of discounted caravan park sites for self-contained RVs after figures from council staff showed it had attracted only 40 visitors.

Council staff recommended it be discontinued.

The trial was designed to provide an alternative to coax recreational vehicles away from the Jetty Foreshores, where large numbers of free campers had resulted in complaints to the council.

An amendment was proposed by Cr Sally Townley to continue the trial for a further 12 months, as it had run for less than eight months and little data had been collected from it to see what other spending the campers did in the city.

This was disallowed by the Mayor, who ruled it was a direct negative to the staff recommendation, moved by

Cr Keith Rhoades.

Cr Rhoades said the trial had “virtually thrown away \$10,000, of ratepayers’ money,” a figure disputed by Cr Townley, who said that figure represented the full price if each of the 10 discounted sites available was booked every night at full price, which was not realistic as the occupancy rate for unpowered sites was under 25%.

Cr Sultana said the trial had not been policed effectively and he had heard the discounted RV campers had been using the park’s facilities, without paying any extra, and a prime holiday park like Park Beach Holiday Park was not really an appropriate spot for this type of activity.

He suggested the area used by the Rally Australia crews, behind the international stadium, where there is a black water dumping point for RVs.

Mayor Denise Knight warned Cr Nan Cowling against “slagging off” council staff after Cr Cowling accused those in charge of publicising the trial of \$10 camp sites at Park Beach Holiday Park of a lack of interest in it.

Cr Cowling closely questioned the timing and placement of media releases on the trial.

The council’s director of corporate business, Andrew Beswick, said they had specifically emailed a press release to the largest relevant organisation, the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) in November 2013 and the discount had been publicised on the council’s website.

The council general manager Steve McGrath said an article had appeared in Caravanning News in December 2013, but the council could not force magazines to

publish and the nature of RV owners was that they moved constantly.

Cr Cowling said the members of the Coffs Harbour Caravan Club had spent more than \$38,000 on one trip to Evans Head and Coffs Harbour was missing out on a valuable new source of revenue.

The decision to end the trial was passed 3-2 with Crs Denise Knight, Keith Rhoades and Mark Sultana in favour and Crs Townley and Cowling opposed.

With Cr Bob Palmer suffering a broken foot, Cr Rodney Degens attending a railway forum and Crs Garry Innes and John Arkan attending the Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) conference in Alice Springs, Coffs Harbour City councillors only just managed to make a quorum for Thursday’s regular council meeting.