



Katanning awarded RV-friendly status

■ Gareth Thomas

Katanning may experience an increase in the number of tourists after the town was declared recreational-vehicle friendly by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia.

Towns are awarded the RV-friendly status by the CMCA, based on the series of stringent criteria including access to general shopping area, provision of adequate and low-cost parking,

access to drinking water and a free dump point for the RVs' black water.

Shire of Katanning chief executive Julian Murphy said the RV-friendly status was something the Shire had made a commitment to achieve by ensuring Katanning met all the required criteria.

"Hopefully, if CMCA members spend some time in the town, even if it is only a few hours, they will spend some money at the local businesses and add to our economy

overall," he said. "CMCA members meet and talk to one another a lot, so if you can build up a good reputation in that community, then it can spread right across Australia."

CMCA director Ken Kipling said travellers could enter a RV-friendly town with the knowledge they would be adequately provided for.

"CMCA strives to promote a number of programs that will facilitate improved relationships between RV travellers, government and community," he said.



EDITORIAL

Campers pave Lockhart's streets with gold

WAGGA residents and travellers can whinge and argue as much as they want about our divisive Wilks Park.

Apparently the city's free camping hot spot pales in comparison to the real jewel in the Riverina's crown: Lockhart.

The laid-back, easy going verandah town ticks all the boxes for tourists, according to Caravanning Australia.

The magazine has voted the township numero uno of the six hidden gems of inland NSW.

While caravan parks across the country struggle to keep the punters coming through the gates thanks to free camping and pimped-out, self-sufficient motorhomes, Lockhart Caravan Park is bucking the trend – seeing a 300 per cent increase in overnight stays last financial year and numbers staying high so far this year.

Wagga's tourism heads may have their noses out of joint over Caravanning Australia's list, which listed Wagga as third behind Lockhart and Coonamble.

Tamworth, Griffith and Parkes padded out the rest of the top six.

So what is it that Lockhart is doing right

exactly?

Basically, they are welcoming caravanners and "grey nomads" – a hugely untapped market.

This is a group who spends \$7 billion across the country annually and continues to grow stronger each year.

Camping has been part of our culture since the jolly swagman unfurled his swag under the shade of a Coolibah tree.

There are hundreds of thousands of Aussies with great memories of exploring the nation's caravan parks with Mum and Dad in their youth.

Many of these youngsters have since grown up, and now hit the highways searching for new adventures.

It's amazing how quickly word spreads among this highly-connected, mobile community.

Spots such as Bourke are well-known for their open-door policy when it comes to motorhomes and caravanners.

Domestic road travellers have breathed new lifeblood into many smaller communities such as Lockhart, spending money in shops, petrol stations and eateries while



enjoying little extras such as ease of parking,
good facilities and dump points.

Anyone who doubts the strength of this
niche market is totally out of touch with
reality.





TOURING: Dempsey has plan to attract tourists

Superpark plan for RVs

Mike Derry

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MAYORAL candidate Jack Dempsey has come up with a plan to attract people travelling in recreational vehicles to stop over in Bundaberg.

"I want to make the Bundaberg region the friendliest place in Australia to visit and spend money in the economy," he said.

Mr Dempsey said Bundaberg was currently listed by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) as a non-friendly location.

He said the lack of a place for RVs to stop in Bundaberg was a lost opportunity for the economy.

His plan is to create a superpark for RVs close to the facilities in Bundaberg.

Mr Dempsey said he had spoken to the CMCA and it would be willing to cover the costs in a land lease arrangement.

"There would be no cost to ratepayers but the regional economy would greatly benefit," he said.

Mr Dempsey said the RVs were mostly self contained so there would be a minimal infrastructure cost.

He said there were more

than 500,000 RVs in Australia, and about 200,000 a year would go straight past Bundaberg on the Bruce Hwy because there was no welcome for them here.

"We're missing out on millions of dollars and it would cost the ratepayers nothing," he said.

"Many of the RV owners are semi-retired who would be more than willing to assist other community groups while they're staying here," he said.

Mr Dempsey said he wanted RV owners to present Bundaberg to each other as a good place to stop.

"Around the campfires around Australia I want people to be talking about the Bundaberg region for its historical centres of Gin Gin and Childers and its beautiful beaches as a positive experience," he said.

He said he would also look at enhancing the facilities at Gin Gin and Childers.

Mr Dempsey said Bundaberg could host the CMCA's national rally in 2018 if his superpark plan came off.

"That would deliver a minimum \$3 million boost to the local small businesses," he said.



FUTURE PLANS: Mayoral candidate Jack Dempsey wants to set up a super park for RVs to visit Bundaberg.

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