



New trends arise in tourists that pass through the North Burnett

Number of visitors is up

Anastassia Perets



anastassia.perets@cnbtimes.com.au

TOURIST season is well and truly underway in the North Burnett, with grey nomads flocking north for winter.

A number of motor homes from the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia visited Monto recently – the same group that crowned the town as being RV friendly.

Known as the Highway Wanderers, president Jo Tremain said the visit has assured the town's high quality hospitality.

"All the facilities are here, and have really and truly enjoyed it," she said.

Coming along were 27 motor homes, made up of about 49 people.

Many stopped at the Monto Airport grounds, and the spot had familiarity to some.

"Many of us here were Blaze Aiders that helped out Monto in the past," Mrs Tremain said.

Thanks to advertising efforts, North Burnett councillor and tourism

ambassador Paul Lobegeier predicts this tourist season will be a strong one.

"From Australia Country Way's partnership with other roads, we are reaching a larger target," he said.

"We've been going to CMC shows, and making first point of call with the grey nomads.

"Most people have done their homework and come

along to the shows to assure they've made the right decision.

"Our next show is in

June."

Cr Lobegeier said he had noticed a trend.

"It appears many people from New South Wales will be coming north to Birdsville for a festival," he said.

"They are looking for alternative routes from Sydney and Melbourne, and as pulling their vans can be a slow process, are looking for quieter highways."

The travellers also tend to stop many times a day on their journey.

"They're looking for

quirky spots, often near water like the Bunyip Hole, to sit and relax," Cr Lobegeier said.

Other than injecting cash into local business, hosting tourists has other benefits.

At a special dinner event, the Highway Wanderers raised \$1000 for Monto Driving Force and \$700 towards the Monto Polocrosse Grounds.

Though most of the Highway Wanderers have now left, some have hung around and are house-sitting around Monto.



» CASH INJECTION: North Burnett's tourist season is now in full swing, with grey nomads making their way up north for winter. The Highway Wanderers stayed in Monto for almost a week. PHOTO: ANNIE PERETS



Recreational Vehicle Strategy (ReVS)

Liverpool Plains Shire Council's (LPSC) preliminary draft Recreational Vehicle Strategy (ReVS) has been presented to Councillors, seeking feedback from them, prior to the document being placed on public exhibition.

"Council has seen significant community interest and support for the preparation of this strategy from a broad range of stakeholders within the Shire. We've completed data collection and site visits as well as the preliminary draft strategy for initial stakeholder feedback. We're encouraging initial responses to be in by June 3, then we'll complete a copy for Council to adopt for public exhibition which hopefully will take place from the end of June until mid-July. Council will then consider submissions and following any amendments endorse the strategy. Following endorsement there will be a roll out of recommendations in line with the agreed action plan.

"Council is grateful to local organisations, sporting clubs and the business community for input to date and

looks forward to other community members contributing during the period of public exhibition," Councillor Hope said.

"This strategy is an increasingly important element in fostering economic development, employment opportunities and tourism potential within the Shire as the number of recreational vehicles continues to grow with current estimates indicating there are approximately 80,000 touring the roads of Australia and within excess of 20,000 being sold annually that number is expected to exceed 100,000 in the foreseeable future.

"The very successful Australian Caravan Club Muster staged in Quirindi earlier this year provided quantitative and qualitative localised data to be collected indicating that over a few days' stay an average of \$504.56 was spent by each individual vehicle's occupants. The event also allowed solid relationships to be built with the RV industry and enthusiasts which the draft strategy aims to build on. The impending retirement

of the baby boomer generation is expected to add a further significant economic boost to an already lucrative market," he continued.

"Modern RV travellers are consistent spenders, purchasing a wide range of goods and services during their travels. The Shire's rural centres and townships stand to economically benefit from their presence and as such Council is investing in improvements to camping areas at Wallabadah, Premer and Currabubula as well as working with the Werris Creek and Willow Tree communities to develop facilities in their towns. Council understands the importance of the strategy canvassing a range of needs and expectations that need delivering and the imperative that our communities retain ownership of the process. As such we will continue to work closely with all interested parties to ensure the best long term outcomes for all concerned," Councillor Hope concluded.



Latest figures show more tourists are visiting Cobar

The number of visitors to Cobar has grown this year with the Great Cobar Heritage Centre reporting an increase of three percent on last year.

Cobar Shire Council tourism officer John Martin said recent figures from Tourism Research Australia show in 2015 caravan and motorhome registrations have increased for the 10th consecutive year and now total over 580,000 nationwide.

"In Cobar, visitation numbers during the first three months of 2016 are up on the same period last year and last year was the best year for five years," Mr Martin reported to council.

He said based on their figures, spending by visitors is down about one per cent on last year, particularly in the area of souvenirs, however the museum revenue is up a couple of per cent on last year.

Mr Martin attributes the visitor increase to the good response he has been receiving at caravan and camping shows where he's been showcasing Cobar and the Kidman Way.

He estimates that 30 per cent of the caravaners who visit Cobar are freedom campers.

"One night last week there were 38 vans at the Newey," Mr Martin said.

He said the Cobar Caravan Park is currently operating at 60-70 per cent capacity compared to 85-95 per cent capacity five years ago.

"Based on prices at the Cobar Caravan Park, that equates to about \$1,200 per night, \$8,400 each week that the Cobar Caravan Park is missing out on," Mr Martin said.

"As the number of free campers increase, the management of free camping may need to be addressed again in the future," Mr Martin warned council in his report.



Campervan rally benefits outlined

A REPORT to next week's Bathurst Regional Council meeting outlines the benefits Bathurst received when the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia held its 30th anniversary rally in the pit complex at Mount Panorama earlier this year.

The event, held from April 25 to May 1, was attended by about 1700 club members in 960 vehicles as well as 70 traders.

It is estimated the rally equated to at least \$500,000 in economic benefits to the city, of which \$150,000 was spent by the participants.

The Bathurst Visitor Information Centre circulated about 7000 Bathurst-themed items to people attending the rally, while about 500 local tours were also booked.

As a result of the event, the club was able to make several donations to local organisations before leaving.

These included Daffodil Cottage (\$2500 to the building fund and \$700 to its wig library); Riding for the Disabled (\$1700); Bathurst Community Transport (\$1108); and the Rural Fire Service (\$3000).