



RV drivers unaware of Numurkah rules

ROBYN and Garry are living full-time in their self-contained recreational vehicle, and were one of three RV drivers who had parked for several nights at the Numurkah showgrounds last week.

The RV drivers were unaware that camping is not permitted in the area, or in any showground within the Moira Shire.

All drivers said the Numurkah site was promoted via *Camps Australia* seventh edition and a user-generated Wiki-camps app, and they believed it was a free and legal campsite.

This comes as Moira Shire proposes a 12 month RV Friendly Scheme, which could allow low-cost overnight parking for self-contained vehicles in shire recreation reserves.

The plan has polarised local commercial caravan park operators who believe the proposal is unfair competition.

The mature-aged couple are seasonal workers, following the harvest trail from Queensland. They are looking for some stable employment so they can settle in the Goulburn Valley.

Robyn, who didn't want to provide the *Leader* with her full name, said that once they get a full-time job, they intend to stay in a commercial caravan park.

"We occasionally use a caravan park, if we have the money," she said. "But they charge around \$30 a night for a piece of dirt. That's half of our dole gone. What are we supposed to live on?"

Robyn and Garry had parked under shelter and were running power off their own generator and solar panels.

Robyn said that they would move on if directed by a shire officer, and camp by the river in Cobram, but no one had approached them.

"Numurkah is a friendly town. We go to the IGA for food. We bring business to the town."

They pulled into the recreation reserve to use the dump point, but

when they found it was locked, they described it as a "pain in the butt".

RV users must pay a \$20 key deposit at the Numurkah Visitor Information Centre, or caravan park.

This was introduced after Goulburn Valley Water discovered the presence of what appeared to be cooking fat and paper in the system. Robyn said no other town locks its RV dump.

Carol Harris from Bendigo had pulled-in late at night to use the dump point, but couldn't access the key out of business hours.

"Paying \$20 to get the key is ridiculous, I'll hang out till I get to Shepparton," she said.

"Yesterday, one couple were so desperate that they took the toilet cassettes out of their vans and dumped it in the public toilets, because the dump point was locked."

Ms Harris is a Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia member, who had attended club RV rallies in Numurkah. She was also unaware camping was illegal.

She said the showground was a quiet and safe site, and she pulls in regularly. She said if she couldn't stop there, she would be forced to

park in the street.

"I'm not paying for commercial caravan park site facilities, when I don't need them," she said.

Kaye Stephan from Mildura said local friends had referred her to the showgrounds as a safe spot to park overnight. She had been there for three nights, and was about to move on.

None of the three RV drivers had noticed the small "no camping" sign, by the showgrounds entrance.

"The sign is not big enough, no-one even saw it," she said.

The RV drivers said they were happy to pay a small overnight parking fee, as proposed by the Moira Shire RV draft strategy.

The shire is currently seeking public comment on the scheme, before it goes back to council, however, none of the drivers that the *Leader* approached were aware of the fact.

Camps Australia editor Cathryn Fennell said she had updated the current edition, that now listed Numurkah as day use only.

She said the publication offers readers free updates on its website,

but some people keep referring to old, outdated editions.

"We also say that this is a guide only, and please refer to signs," she said.

Numurkah Recreation Reserve president Andrew Henderson said that policing illegal camping was a shire matter.

"We're guided by what the shire tells us. We've been told not to do anything about it, but it doesn't worry us one way or another," he said.

He said they had received a complaint from a Tunnock Road resident who feared for their privacy when RV drivers pulled into the showgrounds, opposite their house.

Moira Shire CEO Mark Henderson told the *Leader* that the shire is currently seeking feedback on its RV Strategy, and he encouraged visitors and residents to have their say.

"For now, our local law doesn't allow camping at this location and our officers monitor compliance with these requirements," he said.