



Club to continue RV parking push

ALEXANDRA LOKAN

THE Berri Club will lodge a development application with a local council to allow it to continue to host recreational vehicles (RVs) and campervans overnight.

While the club has advertised itself as an RV-friendly destination online, Berri Barmera Council last month said it had received complaints about vans parked at the club and that it needed to seek development approval before its land could be used for overnight accommodation.

Berri Club board member Alan

Ranford said the meeting with council had clarified what it needed to do to meet development regulations.

"We need to map out some things like parking and... entries and exits.

"We need to lodge that and there's some fees and charges and it should be okay.

"(Council) has explained it pretty well."

Mr Ranford said club members and the community were largely supportive of the move to provide temporary accommodation.

"As far as I'm aware, the people who have stayed haven't made any

mess or trouble," he said.

Council development officer Cheryle Pedler said an application for a change of land use to allow vans to park at the site for accommodation purposes would then be considered by the Riverland Regional Development Assessment Panel (RRDAP).

"Council has committed to working through the process and to make it uncomplicated," she said.

"In these circumstances I'll help as much as I can... but it's not a decision for me, it would go to the development panel."



● The Murray Pioneer, 12/5/15



Cooroy to let the good times stay

Mayor rolled in RV options by council's happy campers

By **PETER GARDINER**

COOROY had a recreational vehicle stopover on public land approved last Thursday night.

Noosa Council must now consult with the local car club which uses the site if it needs to use land in front of its clubhouse.

While councillor Sandy Bolton, who won support for this proviso, said this arrangement for the council-controlled site at Mary River Rd would give the RV operation the “flexibility” the car club needs, Mayor Noel Playford was a strong dissenting voice.

The land is used by the car club and local pony club, which must now fit in with bands of passing campers in self-contained RVs.

All councillors support the RV stopover for up to 40 vehicles, but Cr Playford believed the council should not be obligated to consult with the Combined Coastal Car Club when it needed land, nor should it be dictated to about what internal roads the RVs could use.

He said suggesting that the car club be consulted

“every time you wanted to use that is over the top”.

Cr Bolton won support for restricting the use of one of two accesses in the best interest of the car club, which had formally objected to land near its clubhouse being used for recreational vehicles, as it would impede the club's fundraising activities.

This was after the mayor failed in a bid to have the motion for the RV approval amended so that only “legitimate use for the site will be given priority”, with the “the area in front of the clubhouse used on an as-need basis, including overflow if required and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

“You have two clubs that have used it for club activities and no one is taking that away from them.”



FROM PAGE 10

when maintenance of other areas is required”.

When asked by councillor Tony Wellington what he meant by legitimate use, the mayor said: “If a community organisation has the use of council land for their club activities, that doesn’t mean that they are entitled to let out that land and charge other people to come in and camp in caravans, for example.

“Somebody has been allowing caravans camping on this land for years and I presume they’re paying for the privilege. Whoever that is, I don’t know, but I don’t call that legitimate.

“You have two clubs that have used it for club activities and no one is taking that away from them – and that includes their sausage sizzles.”

Cr Playford said it was fine for a community organisation to make requests and for council to consider these.

“Just because they want something does not mean that they should get it.

“This is community land, okay? It’s not their land. I think it’s going to be a little bit unworkable.

“For a community group to say there are two vehicular accesses to this big parcel off land, but you can’t use this one, is absolutely disgraceful.”



FLEXI DEBATE: Councillor Sandy Bolton is keen to get the best recreational vehicle stop outcome.

PHOTO: GEOFF POTTER

Having council consult wins the day

COUNCILLOR Sandy Bolton was adamant last week that Noosa Council needed to listen to the concerns of the Combined Coastal Car Club as far as the new RV stop at Mary River Rd in Cooroy.

In opposing an amendment by Mayor Noel Playford who wanted to deny

the club any consultation rights for public land in front of their clubhouse needed for RV stops, Cr Bolton said "we have developed a partnership with them".

She said the use of the RV overflow area land in question would be needed "maybe six, eight, ten times

a year".

Cr Bolton said under her motion supported by other councillors that it would be "a simple process" where the RV site "caretaker calls the club and says we need it for overflow".

She said the mayor's proposal of "taking out that

consultation is a bit over the top".

Under her proposed motion, which was supported last Thursday night at full council, she said the "RV stop is there, the car club can still use it and their rights have not been taken away".



Councillor hopes camp spot is not on the nose

LOCATION, location – smack between a sewage treatment and a thumping manufacturing business – that is the concerning factor for Councillor Tony Wellington about the site of the new recreational vehicle stop in Cooroy.

The council last Thursday approved the Mary River Rd facility which Cr Wellington has his doubts about.

“I support the motion. It will be interesting to see how this experiment actually turns out,” she said.

He said on one side was Ritek – “one of our more excellent businesses in this shire and a very valued corporate citizen”.

“On the other side we’ve got a sewerage plant,” he said.

“So we’ve got an RV stopover stuck between a sewage treatment plant and a correctly zoned industrial

business that generates a reasonable amount of noise.

“My great fear is that we start getting complaints about the noise.”

He said Ritek is where it should be and “shouldn’t have to field complaints”.

“So hopefully there will be enough RV drivers that are reasonably happy to utilise this site. I still have qualms. We all were scratching our heads trying to resolve this problem about an RV stopover for Cooroy.

“I fully support and we’re giving it a shot, but I still have some doubts, about whether this is the ideal location.”

Cr Playford said on the positive side Ritek would not operate at night offering some peace and quite at the stopover, while during the day the RV tourists should be out and about spending money locally.



HAPPY CAMPERS: The Combined Coastal Car Club at one of its Cooroy Show and Shines.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED.



Pioneer Park trial may end early

Threat to free camp

A 12-MONTH Pioneer Park freedom camping trial could be cancelled, despite still having two months to run.

Ballarat councillors will consider a proposal to end the trial on Wednesday night after two of the biggest local caravan parks said it was affecting their numbers.

The caravan parks, which were not named, have also put forward evidence of the Wendouree site's alleged misuse, including people overstaying the two permitted nights and not meeting the self-containment water and toilet measures.

In a submission to the council, the park operators said site nights were down 120 in December 2014 compared with the previous year, with a further drop of 212 nights in January.

In February, one of the

FIONA HENDERSON

parks was down 58 site nights.

They also provided photographic evidence of small campervans, caravans, roof-top campers, tents, mini buses, four-wheel-drives, cars and people with swags using the park.

The operators also claimed about 53 per cent of overnight users were "non-compliant" with the water requirements.

However, the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA), which supervises the freedom camping, said some vehicles had stayed longer than two nights due to exceptional circumstances, including a personal injury.

The CMCA said there were circumstances, – such as the Rainbow Serpent Festival, the Begonia Festival and the swap meet – where the

park was swamped by campers.

"While it may be argued that they did not comply with the self-containment requirement, it is argued that, by and large, they adhered to the 'leave no trace' principles and it would have been a negative outcome for the city to redirect these campers."

It also said extra difficulties were due to Pioneer Park being a public park, unlike other freedom camping sites, where rules cannot always be enforced.

In a report to council, chief executive officer Anthony Schinck said there were alternatives to cancelling the trial, such as undertaking further research, having further discussions with the CMCA on alternative models and locations, or tightening conditions of the trial.

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Wheels in motion

Toni Houston

• But not everyone feeling friendly about Bega RV push

THE Bega Valley Shire Council is applying to the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) to have Bega and Cobargo included in the Recreational Vehicle Friendly Town (RVTF) program.

However, the plan to make the area more "RV friendly" is already causing a decidedly unfriendly rift in the community.

In the pro corner sits the council and applicants, citing the RVTF as an exciting new market to explore.

In opposition sit existing caravan park owners, claiming the RVTF will have a disastrous impact on their business.

RV Friendly Towns are simply towns that offer basic provisions for RV stopovers, most importantly a "dump point" where drivers can unload their sewage waste.

According to the CMCA guidelines, other essential services are the availability of potable water, provision of short-term, low-cost overnight parking, and good access to a town centre.

The target market for RV Friendly Towns, as identified by the CMCA, is owners of self-contained RV

vehicles that want options of where to stay rather than traditional caravan parks.

"Research shows that 77

per cent of RV members are more likely to visit and stopover in a RV Friendly Town than a destination without that status," CMCA manager of government and stakeholder communications Colin Balfour said.

"The major growth area in RVs is in self-contained vehicles.

"These days, if you spend more than \$45,000 on an RV, you already have power and amenities on board.

"Fifteen years ago, just motorhomes were fitted with amenities, but now caravans are too.

"These clients just want a cheap place to park for the night, and a dump site.

"They don't want to be paying for additional services."

Mr Balfour said research conducted four years ago by government agency Tourism Research Australia revealed only 34 per cent of RV drivers stay in caravan parks, 16 per cent never stay in caravan parks, and 50 per cent use a mix of commercial and non-commercial accommodation.

Mr Balfour said this latter percentage is higher now,

pointing to RV drivers wanting choice.

And with 430,000 registered RVs in Australia, and another 120,000 new RVs being purchased each year, councils and towns are under increasing pressure to offer this choice if they're to capitalise on this lucrative, burgeoning market.

"Unlike normal tourists who just do touristy things, RV travellers literally have their home on wheels, and interact with a town very

differently," Mr Balfour said.

"They visit the supermarket, hairdresser, hardware shop, newsagent.

"There's a big cross section of spending that benefits the entire community."

BVSC group manager of strategy and business services Lucas Scarpin said inclusion in the program is a valuable tourism asset that helps motorhome, campervan and caravan travellers as they journey throughout Australia.

"It's important that visitors to our towns and villages are encouraged to stop

and seek out local experiences," Mr Scarpin said.

"The recreational vehicle traveller market is a growing source of revenue for the Bega Valley shire and programs such as this one provide a town or village with an additional promotional stream."

Mr Scarpin said the application to join the Recreational Vehicle Friendly Town program comes from a request put forward by the Cobargo Hotel and the Bega Showground.

"Cobargo and Bega meet

the essential criteria outlined under the RVFT program and a successful application will result in the consideration of membership signage in both locations," he said.

Charlie Bell, chairman of the Bega Showground Trust, confirmed it had lodged its DA.

"We're hoping to offer 14 sites, and we already have a dump point, water and amenities available," Mr Bell said.

Continued page 2



• Bega Showground Trust chairman Charlie Bell and caretaker Allen King are keen to see a successful application for Bega to become an official RV Friendly Town.

Bega RV Friendly Town status creates rift

From page 1

“Like many other showgrounds around Australia, we’re hoping to attract off-street camping suitable for a whole range of RVs.”

The showground already has approval to offer camping in association with showground events such as a showjumping carnival, and have therefore tested the site.

“We had 70 to 100 campers here over the showjumping cup at New Year’s, so we know we can cater to that number.

“We’ve been doing this for over 100 years.”

Mr Bell said the showground’s application to be part of the RVTF program has the support of the Bega Chamber of Commerce, and Mr Bell doesn’t believe it will compete against the interests of traditional caravan parks.

However, this is hotly contested by John Carlon, owner of the Bega

Caravan Park, who claims unapproved camping offered by the showground over last December and January’s summer period had a measurable, and critical, impact on his business.

“Even people who had pre-booked with me called up and cancelled, and went to the showground instead because the showground had undercut my prices,” Mr Carlon said.

“It’s the first time in 12 years of running the park that I haven’t been at full capacity over that period.”

Mr Carlon has invested \$200,000 in upgrades to the caravan park during his tenure, and said if he’d known about the RVTF ambitions for the town, he would never have made those investments - and may not have purchased the park in the first place.

“There is only limited business

in Bega as a drive-through spot,” he said.

“Especially in the off-season, I rely on my overnights.

“If I lose even half of those to the showground, it would be critical for me.”

Mr Carlon only heard about the RVTF applications after reading it in the newspaper.

“It left me just two weeks to submit a formal objection, which I did.

“I’ve had no direct response from council,” Mr Carlon said.

“It’s now a difficult situation, because the same body that regulates what I do is the same body that’s making a decision about the showground.

“So the council has a conflict of interest.”

Mr Carlon believes there should be a strategic approach to the RVTF application, which protects his business and assesses the future



use of the showground in a way that creates a fair “level playing field” for all concerned.

A major anxiety for Mr Carlon is that the showground is developed as simply a cheaper caravan park, a concern appreciated by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia implementing the RVTF program.

“The RVFT program is simply about providing cheaper alternative sites for off-road parking and access to a dump point,” Mr Bal-

four from CMCA said.

“If the showground is offering powered sites, then that’s a deviation from the target market of the RV Friendly Towns program.”

Mr Bell confirmed it planned to offer powered sites.

“We plan to charge \$19 per night for a powered site, and \$15 per night for unpowered site.”

These prices undercut the Bega Caravan Park - which currently charges \$27-\$30 for an unpowered site - but as far as the CMCA is concerned, pricing adjustments and becoming more savvy about the new RVTF market is all part of the game.

“If an RV rolls into town, fully self-sufficient with solar panels,

generators, inverters, batteries, and amenities, they simply don’t want to pay expensive rates at traditional caravan parks for sites with no services,” Mr Balfour said.

“The CMCA and the RVTF program is all about offering freedom of choice, and giving self-contained RVs options.

“And those options make them stop in a town, rather than drive through.

“Caravan parks need to work out how to capitalise on this increased traffic, rather than block it.

“And the whole community stands to benefit.”

Mr Balfour added that \$54million per annum is still spent by CMCA members in traditional caravan parks, with many drivers electing to stay in a park for security reasons even if fully self-contained.

And it’s an investment that Mr Carlon for one wants to protect into the future.

“If a town is offering next-to-free RV sites, no-one wins,” Mr Carlon said.

“The council is essentially sub-

sidising people overnighting more cheaply, and that will eventually be passed on to the ratepayers.

“The local baker doesn’t have to compete with someone giving away free bread, so why me?”

As Mr Carlon continues to fight for his voice to be heard, it seems the wheels are already in motion towards an RVFT future.

Bega Valley Shire councillors have resolved to endorse the Bega Showground and Cobargo Hotel application for membership in the RVTF program, and have stated that other towns in the shire may also be offered opportunity to participate.



• Bega Caravan Park owners John and Loretta Carlon say their considerable investment in amenities for guests is in serious jeopardy should the RV Friendly Town application be approved.



Growth in Mackay's caravan industry

Free-wheelers at large

Sherele Moody

APN NEWSDESK

news@dailymercury.com.au

FREE-WHEELING holiday-makers are driving up caravan and campervan sales in Mackay and putting more money in our pockets.

Registrations of these vehicles increased 9.1% across the region last year.

The rise was 3.8% above the national average of 5.3%.

The city is home to 2732 mobile holiday homes – an increase of 230 on 2013's figures.

Caravan Industry Association of Australia chief executive officer Stuart Lamont said regional and rural areas were the biggest winners.

"We are in a boom at present – and this flows through suppliers, manufacturers, retailers and caravan parks," Mr Lamont

said.

"But what is most important is that 90% of all activity is in regional Australia.

"About \$17.44 billion is the estimated size of contribution to the Australian economy by caravanning and camping and many regional centres receive welcome money from the expenditure conducted by caravanners and campers."

Travel writer Cindy Gough said caravanning holidays were cheap and cheerful.

"You can go wherever you want to," the co-author of *The Grey Nomad's Guidebook* and website said.

"You can get into the outback, you can get into some of those far-away places and camp and you can get in tune with nature."

Australia is home to 556,844 registered caravans and campervans and it is the country's fastest-growing vehicle type.

According to Tourism Research Australia, caravanning and camping had

the nation's largest accommodation-type growth last year.

It grew 7% to almost 45 million nights in 2014, while the drive market also rose 7% to 58 million trips.



You can get into the outback, you can get into some of those far-away places and camp...

– Travel writer Cindy Gough



WANDERLUST: Caravan registrations have increased along with expanding van sales in the Mackay region as more and more travellers discover their versatility.

PHOTO: APN PHOTO LIBRARY



Caravan sales on a roll



COMFY: Susan Baumgarten of Caravan Mart shows off the luxury vehicles available to caravanners these days.
Pictures: MEGAN TAYLOR

Homes on wheels enjoy rapid acceleration in popularity

TONY RAGGATT



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WHEN the times get tough, the tough take to the road.

That's according to Townsville's Caravan Mart managers Bob and Kaye Black, who are riding a wave demand for caravans and campervans.

They have two theories.

Bob reckons the mining downturn has led to retrenched mine workers and their families buying a caravan to see Australia and make it cheaper to live and easier to

relocate for work, while Kaye believes terrorism has led to more people choosing to holiday in Australia's wide open spaces.

Whatever the answer, the caravan industry is booming.

According to an industry study of Australian Bureau of Statistics motor vehicle information, caravans and campervans are the fastest-growing vehicle type in Australia.

Caravan and campervan registrations increased by 5.3 per cent in 2014 to

556,844, while recreational vehicle production jumped 8 per cent last year.

In Queensland, 127,434 caravans and 13,311 campervans were registered last year.

Mr Black, who with his late father Neil, has been in the industry since the 1980s, said the mining downturn had led people to buy caravans.

"Caravans give people flexibility to move and chase the work," Mr Black said.

"People are struggling for dollars and with a caravan they are able to relocate a lot easier and they don't have the rental costs hanging over the heads."

Mrs Black said the latest boom was similar to the 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre.

"People don't want to travel overseas, they are more comfortable to travel in Australia," Mrs Black said.

"I think that's what's happening again now."



Caravan Industry of Australia spokeswoman Callie Henderson said more young

people were hitting the road.

“We have seen caravanning and camping activity increasing over the past decade as Australians – particularly young families, who make up 50 per cent of the current market – hit the road for a ‘back to nature’ holiday experience,” Ms Henderson said.

She said caravanning and camping in Australia was the best value holiday you could get – not only from a cost perspective, but looking at the broader value for new experiences and building personal bonds away from the fast-paced urban life most Australians were used to.

**“ Caravans
give
people flexibility
to move and
chase the work**

BOB BLACK



PORT ADELAIDE

RV park aiming to drive up economy

Kurtis Eichler

AN OLD railway yard at Port Adelaide could be transformed into a motorhome park with the potential to inject millions into the area's economy.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia says a recreational vehicle parking area on Lipson St would cost about \$20,000 to build and could attract up to 200 tourists every day.

The club's SA co-ordinator, Kevin Collins, said the park had potential to generate up to \$35,000 per week in tourist spending and almost \$2 million annually.

The group has flagged the idea for a former railway marshalling yard located next to the SA Aviation Museum, owned by the State Government.

Dock One and the old General Motors Holden factory site had previously been considered for such a park.

But the State Government plans to sell Dock One as one of six parcels of land at Port

Adelaide to generate \$2 billion in development.

"Our aim is to bring instant life and wealth back into the Port by attracting tourists," Mr Collins said.

"Port Adelaide is well established as a tourism destination having three diverse and quality museums, dolphin cruises and a historic retail precinct.

"They are all within easy access of the proposed RV parking sites and the facility also has a high level of flexibility and can be relocated or closed easily."

Mr Collins said he would lobby the State Government and Port Adelaide Enfield Council for funding to realise the dream.

Port Adelaide Enfield Mayor Gary Johanson welcomed the idea and said he was open to talking funding once the land had been secured.

"The more people that see the Port the more people that can talk it up," Mr Johanson said.

"The council could look

at (funding) assistance if it was a minimal amount like \$20,000 but obviously the Government would need to make suitable land available."

Port Adelaide state Labor MP Susan Close welcomed the proposal.

But Dr Close did not say whether the State Government would turn over the land or fund the idea.



Ray and Dianne Cowley at the potential park site.



Boom times: caravanning and camping worth an estimated \$17.44b

More vans hit the road

Sherele Moody

APN Newsdesk

FREE-wheeling holiday-makers are driving up caravan and campervan sales in the Fraser Coast and putting more money in our pockets.

Registrations of these vehicles increased 4.66% across the region last year.

However, the rise was 0.64% below the national average of 5.3%.

The coast is home to 12,491 mobile holiday homes – an increase of 556 on 2013's figures.

Caravan Industry Association of Australia chief executive officer Stuart Lamont said regional and rural areas were the biggest winners.

"We are in a boom at present – and this flows through suppliers, manufacturers, retailers and caravan parks," Mr Lamont said.

"But what is most important is that 90% of all activity is in regional Australia.

"About \$17.44 billion is the estimated size of contribution to the Australian economy by caravanning and camping and many regional centres receive welcome money from the expenditure conducted by caravanners and campers as they explore the country."

Travel writer Cindy Gough said caravanning holidays were cheap and cheerful.

"You can go wherever you want to," the co-author of The Grey Nomad's Guidebook and website said.

"You can get into the outback, you can get into some of those far away places and

camp and you can get in tune with nature.

"They're often cheaper than hotels and resorts, and caravans and campervan holidays give you that sense of camaraderie with other people who are doing it."

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According to Tourism Research Australia, caravanning and camping had the nation's largest accommodation-type growth last year.

– APN NEWSDESK



HITTING THE ROAD: According to Tourism Research Australia, caravanning and camping had the nation's largest accommodation-type growth last year.

PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED



Stakeholder mediation to follow claims of Pioneer Park misuse

Free camp trial concerns

MELISSA CUNNINGHAM

A DECISION on a controversial 12-month Pioneer Park freedom camping trial has been delayed by the City of Ballarat.

Councillor Peter Innes put forward an alternative motion at the council meeting on Wednesday evening.

He requested a deferral until after a mediation meeting was held between the Campervan and Motorhome

Club of Australia, Ballarat caravan park owners and the Victorian Caravan Parks Association.

Cr Innes said the views of all parties needed to be heard by councillors before a final decision was made.

The trial still has two months to run but claims about the Wendouree site's alleged misuse, including people overstaying the two permitted nights and not meeting the self-containment

water and toilet measures, pushed it prematurely back into the council chamber.

The issues raised were by caravan park operators who said site nights were down 120 in December 2014 compared with the previous year, with a further drop of 212 nights in January. In February, one of the parks was down 58 site nights.

Operators also provided photographic evidence of small campervans, caravans,

roof-top campers, tents, mini buses, four-wheel-drives, cars and people with swags using the park.

But CMCA member Grant Tillet disputed all the claims and maintained the site was monitored five times a day.

"I totally dismiss that harm of any kind is being caused to the park," Mr Tillet said.

The Courier visited Pioneer Park site on Thursday.

There was one recreational vehicle and another smaller

van parked at opposite ends of the camping grounds.

Queensland couple Tony and Sue, who did not want their last name printed, said they had slept in their campervan at the site for two nights.

Tony estimated in that time, he spent between \$300 and \$400 in the city on groceries, petrol and shopping.

Tony said if the freedom camping ground wasn't in Ballarat he and his wife would

have passed through. "If we can't stop somewhere, then we just keep going," Tony said.

Another man, who did not want to be identified, was also staying at the site in his van and said he was on the pension and could not afford caravan park fees.

He said he had found the stay at Pioneer Park "frustrating" because there was no water or generator connection to the site.

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