



*FREE TO BE FREE – The new Willow Tree camping ground in Liverpool Plains Shire.*

# Stay, and don't pay a cent

**A** NEW freedom camping area has been opened at Willow Tree in Liverpool Plains Shire.

Situated at the recreation ground at the end of Recreation Street, the camping area provides toilets and showers, is pet-friendly with potable water available, and can cater for large caravans and motorhomes.

Travellers can stay at the area for up to 72 hours.

Hungry campers should make a bee-

line for the Willow Tree Inn, which has become known for its succulent steaks.

Australia's only naturally burning coal seam, Burning Mountain, is 40km away near Wingen, and makes for a great outing.

The new camping area complements other freedom camping sites at Wallabadah, Premer and Currabubula, and more basic sites at Caroonna and Spring Ridge.

New sites are planned for Werris Creek and Blackville.



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## Site discussed

**A dump site in Beaufort for recreational vehicles was discussed at the last Business for Beaufort meeting.**

Beaufort councillor, Michael O'Connor said that an RV dump site had been on the shire's agenda for some time and the council was working towards a solution.

He said the council was keen to provide a free camp site somewhere in town and was in the process of seeking feedback from people who regularly travel.

Initial evidence suggested caravaners were keen for a good stopping point where then could flush waste water. Initial feedback indicated they were not fussed about free camping, but they believed an RV dump point was a must.

Cr O'Connor said the council was determined to find a suitable site.

He said the council would examine the former primary school oval, the Willoby Street carparks and along the railway line. Heather Biddle added that in Echuca, the RV dump point charged people a small fee which helps offset the cost.

She presented several photos of the RV dump point in Ararat which she believed was a simple, yet effective, option for that town.

She said she was keen for Beaufort to establish an RV point because of the economic benefits to local businesses.

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**The Hedland recreational vehicle overflow campsite.** Picture: Town of Port Hedland

## Town named as RV-friendly

**■ Sophia Constantine**

Port Hedland has reached a tourism milestone after being named the second RV Friendly Town in the Pilbara.

Town of Port Hedland Mayor Camilo Blanco said the council had recently committed to providing the RV overflow site for the next three years to support the developing tourism industry and provide visitors with a low-cost accommodation option.

Mr Blanco said the new wave of tourism was a good time for businesses and entrepreneurs to bring about better services for visitors.

He said the council would work with other Pilbara local governments to promote the town as part of a wider Pilbara Destination Tourism strategy.

"Travellers enjoy what Hedland and the Pilbara have to offer and this clearly boosts our local economy because of the increased influx of seasonal visitors," Mr Blanco said.

"While the RV overflow campsite gave people a reason to stay a night or three in the town, what made their experience unique is the ability to get so close to industry, whether it be a 300,000-tonne iron ore carrier docking in our port or some of the longest trains in the world coming

into Hedland to be unloaded," he said.

Australia's North West chief executive Glen Chidlow commended the Town of Port Hedland for taking the initiative to open the recreational vehicle overflow facility.

"Providing a facility that hasn't previously been on offer to travellers makes Port Hedland a viable place to stop and learn about part of Australia that in many cases drives the Australian economy," he said.

"Providing the appropriate amenities for the travelling visitor will enable people to stay in Port Hedland for longer."

He said the increased popularity of the campsites would bring money into the town and would provide more opportunities for the Pilbara to grow.

A Port Tourist Park spokesman said last year the park was full during the peak season and another busy year was expected.

"It's good for the Pilbara because it diversifies the income that comes into the town, and takes it away from the mining," the spokesman said.

The Port Hedland Visitors Centre reported a 200 per cent increase in visitors when the opening of the RV overflow campsite was announced, and had one of its busiest seasons yet.



**The Hedland recreational vehicle overflow campsite.** Picture: Town of Port Hedland

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## RV Friendly Seminar

Question to LP Shire businesses and organisations – Can you afford to ignore over \$7 billion spent each year by RV travellers, with 30 million domestic visitor nights spent in caravan parks and freedom camping grounds, particularly when around 90 per cent of all visitor nights in the sector are spent in regional Australia?

Liverpool Plains Shire Council (LPSC) Mayor, Councillor Andrew Hope is urging business owners, organisations and other interested parties from right around the Shire, to attend one of the upcoming Recreational Vehicle (RV) Friendly Seminars which will focus on how to best capture the burgeoning RV market.

The seminars, presented by the Australian Caravan Club (ACC), supported by LPSC and with help from a State Government Grant, will be held between 5.30pm and 7.30pm at 1) Quirindi Racecourse dining room on Tuesday January 24 and 2)

Spring Ridge Hall on Wednesday 25 January.

He said the seminars will:

- Raise awareness of the value of the industry to regional communities
- Discuss how communities and individual businesses and organisations can become RV friendly
- Pinpoint opportunities to access this expanding market
- Examine what the RV market might be looking for when they visit communities and requirements from local

businesses

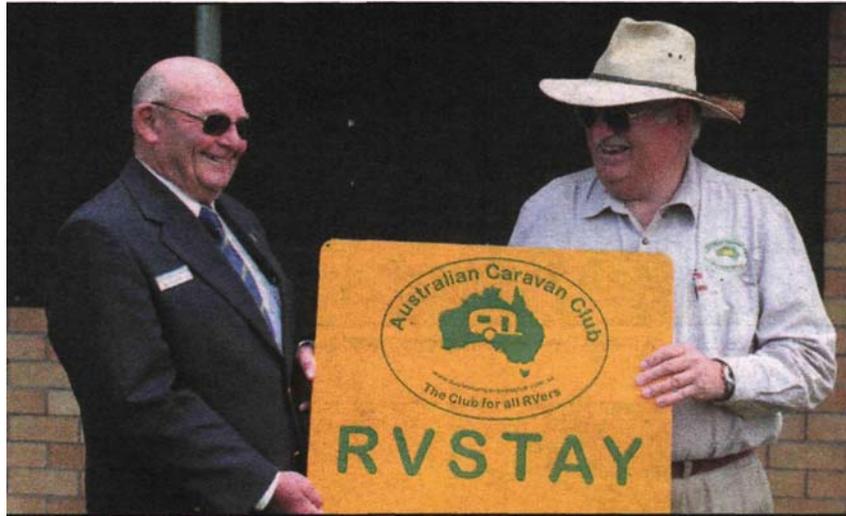
- Information sources for local businesses
- Other information the ACC considers pertinent

“LPSC will be further developing its RV Strategy throughout the year and these seminars are for those interested in driving economic development, wishing to boost business profits and wishing to engage with the continually growing RV community.

“I encourage people from right around the Shire

to attend as Council has plans to expand freedom camping areas to other towns like Werris Creek, Spring Ridge and Blackville. Businesses in Willow Tree, Wallabadah, Currabubula and Premer are already benefiting, as are those in Quirindi as a local hub and Werris Creek through visitors to the Rail Journeys Museum. Council is working hard to see this success rise exponentially, to benefit the whole Shire.” Councillor Hope said.

“There’s an old saying that you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink. With this in mind I’d like businesses and organisations to consider research which shows there are over 600,000 caravans, motorhomes and other industry products registered in Australia and this figure is growing exponentially with over 5 per cent year on year growth over the last few years. Can your business afford not to get on board? Hope to see you at the seminars,” Councillor Hope concluded.



Liverpool Plains Shire Council Deputy Mayor Cr Doug Hawkins and Tom Smith, Deputy Chairman, ACC.