



Please listen: among the people to unsuccessfully advocate for Foster to be a recreational vehicle friendly town at last Wednesday's South Gippsland Shire Council meeting were, from left, Howard Plowright, Jill Plowright, Karen Barwick, David Jones, Linda Giddy, Larry Giddy, Bill Park, Kaylene Jones and Irene Spooner.



Pleading the case for South Gippsland to be more RV Friendly by installing blackwater dump sites, long vehicle parking, signs and free overnight/long term parking during council's presentation session on Wednesday morning were, from back left, Kaylene Jones, Irene Spooner, Foster CFA captain David Jones, Karen Barwick, Howard Plowright and Larry Giddy. Front, Foster Community Association secretary Linda Giddy, Jill Plowright and Bill Park. D032214.

\$3,000 sweetener to take RV waste

TOWNS across South Gippsland will have an opportunity to apply for \$3000 in funding for a blackwater dump site for caravan and camper-van tourists to use.

After a long and convoluted debate, councillors voted unanimously for a \$3000 funding opportunity to be inserted into the Recreational Vehicle Strategy.

Councillors Mohya Davies, Nigel Hutchinson-Brooks and Mayor Jim Fawcett were originally against the idea of providing council funds.

Cr Davies said the RV Strategy had seven action plans to encourage RV visitors to South Gippsland, but said none of them had been costed.

"The actions outlined in the report are not budgeted for," she said.

"We need to work through the strategy in a measured and informed way while supporting our local businesses."

Cr Davies said the strategy "was a

toe in the water" and recommended approving the strategy and revisiting it again in a year.

However, Cr Andrew McEwen, who has strong support from his Meenyan constituents who have been trying to have a dump site approved for nearly five years, convinced council the RV Strategy was "too cautious".

He warned against half measures and reviews into the "inevitable" saying South Gippsland could miss out on tourist dollars while it twiddled its thumbs.

He said the growing RV sector is an evolution of the market - first there were campers in tents, then after World War II that evolved into caravan parks, which then morphed into motels and RV vehicles was the next logical step.

He dismissed caravan park owners' claims that council was interfering in competitive neutrality principals.

"Our aim is to grow the overall pie, not take the market from elsewhere."

Mayor Jim Fawcett attempted one last time to drop the \$3000 funding, but the sweetener from Cr McEwen's motion was too much to pass up.

"I believe the original RV Strategy [without Cr McEwen's changes] allows any town to become an RV Friendly Town without council resources," Cr Fawcett said.

"The implication [in Cr McEwen's motion] is that money would be provided amongst all the towns - I agree it's highly unlikely all 29 communities will want a dump point, but we could say conservatively that perhaps 15 will."

When it was clear Crs Davies, Fawcett and Hutchinson-Brooks' motion would not have the full council's support, they switched their vote to support Cr McEwen, as "fait accompli".



Popular reserve upgrade

THE popular Lane Poole Reserve will get a \$2.45million upgrade as part of the State Government's commitment to the environment.

The family friendly campsite, roughly 60 kilometres from Mandurah, will get 29 new caravan bays, eight tent sites, two new toilets and other facilities including a new fire pit and picnic tables at the Nanga campground as part of the promised \$21.05m Parks for People initiative.

Work has already begun on the Lane Poole Reserve upgrade in an effort to welcome more caravans, camper trailers and campervans.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said the upgrades, made possible by the

State Government's Royalties for Regions program, was one of six projects to commence this year as part of the Parks for People initiative.

"The State Government wants people to get out and enjoy the State's spectacular national parks and Parks for People will provide West Australians and tourists with more low-cost, high-quality holiday options," Mr Jacob said.

Regional Development Minister Terry Redman said through Royalties for Regions, the State Government was making regional WA a better place to work, live and invest.

The campground upgrade is expected to be completed by end of 2014.



RV-friendly status upsets park owners

■ **Shannon Hampton**

Mt Barker caravan park owners have lashed out at the Shire of Plantagenet's decision to attempt to have its RV Friendly Town status reinstated saying it will be detrimental to their businesses.

RV Friendly Towns is promoted by the Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia to have facilities for self-contained travellers including parking, access to water and free dump points.

In 2012, the town's RV Friendly Town status was stripped when a 48-signature petition was submitted by Mt Barker Caravan Park, leading to restrictions being placed on overnight parking.

Mt Barker Caravan Park owners Steve and Shirley Smith and

Porongurup Range Tourist Park owners Fredy and Ulli Zicher wrote a letter to the Shire before last week's council meeting requesting councillors not support a recommendation to have the status reinstated.

Mrs Zicher said she would lose 30 per cent of business because guests would no longer need unpowered sites.

"We bought this business last year in August ... we definitely thought about increasing business, not losing business," she said.

"They argue that people will spend more money in Mt Barker — I don't think that's true.

"They will start camping out of town."

Mr Smith said not only would his business be affected, but as a ratepayer, he believed the RV

Friendly Town concept was unfair.

"I think if you want to turn any town into a RV Friendly Town through the CMCA, the whole story should be told to the ratepayers and they should decide whether they want to fund that," he said.

Shire of Plantagenet Rob Stewart said the council would take on board the concerns of both caravan parks at a workshop on June 24 and said he hoped a collaborative solution could be found.

"The council is responding to pressure from other sources indicating that a growing number of people are travelling around in ... self-sufficient vehicles, and as these things evolve, we need to be in a position to cater for all visitors to our district," he said.



NOT HAPPY CAMPERS

UNLIKE the South Gippsland Shire opening up new RV parking the Wellington Shire Council has said no to more parking spaces at Port Albert.

The Port Albert RV parking problem, first reported in the *Standard* in April 2013 still exists according to Port Albert Progress Association

president Saul Stainer.

Mr Stainer said for a town that should be promoted as a tourist destination, the space currently allocated is inadequate.

"We just want to be able to offer more places for people to stay. The South Gippsland Shire is actively promoting free camping and RV parking," he said.

"Unlike the Wellington Shire Council, which is essentially shutting the door on Port Albert."

The free 24 hour parking spaces for RVs and caravans occupies part of the boat ramp car park which is often filled to capacity.

This is not likely to change anytime soon, with Wellington Shire Council deeming the existing space adequate for the town's needs.

In January this year the progress association put a proposal to the council to move the RV parking area from its current position to the other end of the car park near Rutter Park.

Mr Stainer said the progress association wanted to see a portion of Rutter Park allocated for RV use, however the council has rejected this proposal.

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No more: Saul Stainer is disappointed the Wellington Shire Council won't consider making more room for caravans and RVs in Port Albert.



Not happy campers

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“While the council has acknowledged the issues caused in Port Albert by a lack of RV parking, it is not prepared to do anything about it,” he said.

“The council has acknowledged the economic contribution made by RV users and that we should be trying to encourage them to town, but are just going to put up more signs.”

There are three zones allocated to RV or caravan parking spaces within the boat ramp car park, which are only to be oc-

cupied for a 24 hour period.

“The council is not interested in finding more space. To move the RV parking to the other end of the car park would only need some paint and a bit of curb and channelling,” Mr Stainer said.

“The progress association is now in the process of seeking legal advice, to see if it is possible to private landholders to allow RVs and campers to park on their land.

“Not for money or profit, but just so we can offer more RV parks in town.”