



Sports clubs see hurdles in creating budget van parks

A SUGGESTION that sporting club grounds become temporary caravan parks has had a mixed response.

Caloundra tourism operator Bill Darby floated the idea to cut down on illegal camping in car parks.

But Kawana Rugby League Club president Greg Ingram said it would never work.

"I think it would be tough if they park on the field – the grass dies underneath," he said.

"I can see what they're trying to do but it would be a bit hard to manage."

Noosa AFL Club president Scott McKenzie said they had tried to establish camping grounds before but were knocked back by Sunshine Coast Council, despite leas-

ing the grounds from the State Government.

"It would be a great money spinner for the club, especially in the off season," he said.

"Around Noosa there used to be a lot of caravan parks, there are not many now."

Mr McKenzie said his only concern with tourists camping on their grounds would be the rubbish, the state of the toilets and controlling the people on site.

"And it would take a fair amount of infrastructure to prepare for it," he said.

A council spokeswoman said there were a number of factors, including ownership and lease arrangements, which affected whether clubs could permit caravans and recreational vehicles to

park on their grounds.

"The circumstances can vary for each sporting club, and each site has different complexities," she said.

The spokeswoman said the council was developing a policy to simplify matters because of the growing number of caravans and RVs.

The spokeswoman said individual clubs needed to contact the council before permitting caravan parking within their grounds.

A Noosa Council spokesman said regardless of who owned the land, anyone seeking to develop Open Space Camping or Visitor Accommodation Caravan Park in the Noosa Shire was required to make a material change of use (town plan-



ning) application in accordance with the Noosa Plan.

"At its April meeting Noosa Council agreed to amend its Infrastructure Charges Rebates for Community Organisations Policy to enable community organisations seeking to develop a campground or caravan park to be eligible for a rebate," he said.

"However, the infrastructure charges from Unitywater still apply."

— NICOLE FUGE

Serving tasty bites to RV market

BOB ANTHONY

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HASTINGS POINT is about to be served up in style to more than 40 million US households when an American Recreational Vehicle (RV) cooking show films a segment there next week.

The *RV Cooking Show* has partnered with Pathfinder Outdoor Destinations to produce *90 Days Downunder: 2 Americans 1 Road Trip* tour designed to promote the Australian holiday park industry and Australia to the American RV and holidaying market.

Host Evanne Schmarder and her husband Ray will be at the North Star Caravan Park at Hastings Point on the Tweed Coast to film a segment utilising local produce and highlighting the area.

"Our show is all about promoting RV opportunities and experiences, and we have found there are a lot of similarities between our RV market at home and your caravanning market here in Australia," Ms Schmarder said.

"While our focus is on food – our motto is love to travel, love to eat – we are also covering food producers and interesting people from each area we stop at.

"I think there is a lot in Australia that would appeal to American motor homers."

The Schmarders started their journey in Victoria and



Ripples Cafe manager and executive chef Graham Terrey will be tempting US holiday-makers to the Tweed through an American Recreational Vehicle TV cooking show.

Picture: BEN CASE

will end up at Port Douglas after 90 days, stopping at 23 various locations and holiday parks on the east coast of Australia following the 'grey nomad' trail.

"The *RV Cooking Show* has teamed with Rollin' On TV, which is an RV television show going out on cable and direct TV in the States to more than 40 million households," Ms Schmarder said.

"This tour about is thanks to the help of Terry Goodall from Pathfinder who was the former chief executive officer of BIG 4 Holidays Parks.

"We're boomer-age travelers and have been involved in the RV market for the past 14 years.

"We aim to present Aussie travel and food experiences that are not in the brochure."

They will be filming what the locations have to offer – scenery, shops, restaurants, local foods and wines and the holiday parks who will be hosting them.

Ripples executive chef Graham Terrey is looking forward to hosting the crew.

"This is great exposure not only for North Star and our

restaurant, but also the Tweed," Mr Terrey said.

"I'm not sure what they will want to cook, we might just let them settle have a beer and decide," he said.

"We are pretty honoured to be on the show and whatever we cook, it will feature local produce from the Tweed."

You can follow the Schmarders, who will be blogging and tweeting with content continually streamed back for the *90 Days Downunder: 2 Americans 1 Road Trip* on their Facebook page at [Facebook.com/90daysdownunderRoadTrip](https://www.facebook.com/90daysdownunderRoadTrip).



ROBINVALE REACHING THE EARS OF MANY

The Robinvale CMCA Rally continues to be a topic of conversation amongst the Rally Members that attended in the area.

Pages of June 2014's issue of 'The Wanderer', the official, monthly magazine of the CMCA, have been filled with stories of the success of the rally held in Robinvale. Ray Jones, himself, submitted an article to speak of the success of the event along with an article written by Kea Tracks, a CMCA member named Col Coleman recounting his post rally camping experience in Nyah, a shout-out from Port Stephens Rally Manager (October 2014 Rally), and several 'letters to the editor' extolling the great experience in Robinvale from first-time rally attendees.

Mr. Ray Jones, Robinvale Rally Manager, explained how the rally continues to be on the lips of CMCA members. "Once a rally member has visited a place, they tend to return to that place to revisit the sights and catch up with friends that they made. Before and after a rally, is a time that members take to get to know an area. They are less about getting to a destination and more about experiencing an area for what it is. And, they have the freedom to do that!"

Mr. Jones went on to say that the rally participants would spend up to six weeks

before a rally and up to six weeks after a rally in a 150km radius of the rally site. This type of travel allows the members to truly experience an area then share those experiences with fellow members when they meet again. Nyah experienced this before and after the Robinvale rally with many members visiting then revisiting, and bringing friends, to the town because they enjoyed their time there so much.

Nyah's RV Park is not the only park to experience the benefits of the Robinvale CMCA Rally. The Robinvale Riverside Caravan Park is gaining in notoriety since the event. In May, the caravan park was featured on the front cover of The Wanderer. After viewing the magazine, a CMCA couple 'had to see that park' and made their way to Robinvale to experience the area, staying here for five days.

Later in June, the Riverside Caravan Park was featured in a Caravan World blog. The couple, Denyse and Tony Allsop, wrote that "[Riverside Caravan Park] has to be our favourite park site beside the Murray River". They wrote that they had been to Robinvale

before ten years earlier and were happy to find out that both the caravan park and the Ford dealership were being run by families that they had met ten years previously.

Statements from rally members in June edition of The Wanderer state that the Robinvale Rally was the best rally they have been to in years. Mr. Jones said only one other rally had reached that level of notoriety – Bingara. Now, even Robinvale has replaced that rally as the one to talk about and the place to be.

The greatest compliment to the area came from rally first-timers, Don and Sherilyn Laity: "We enjoyed the entertainment but felt nothing came near the performance from the local Robinvale Secondary College, the Tongan young people, and the Irish dance troupe from Mildura."

The word about the talented youth in Robinvale is getting out.

Robinvale will only continue to be on the lips of the CMCA rally participants as they travel to their next rallies. The October rally will be held in Port Stephens/Nelson's Bay and

Victorian members will be travelling through Robinvale to get to that rally. The April rally will be in Murray Bridge, reminding participants of the beauty of the Murray River they would have experienced in Robinvale the previous year as part of the Murray River Trail.

The Murray River Trail continues to be supported by local councils in Victoria and NSW as a track to follow and experience. As more and more sights along the track are discovered and exposed like Robinvale during the rally, the more people will keep coming to visit.

The rally may have been just a couple of months ago but Robinvale and area will be experiencing the effects for years to come.



Robinvale Sentinel, Robinvale VIC
12 Jun 2014

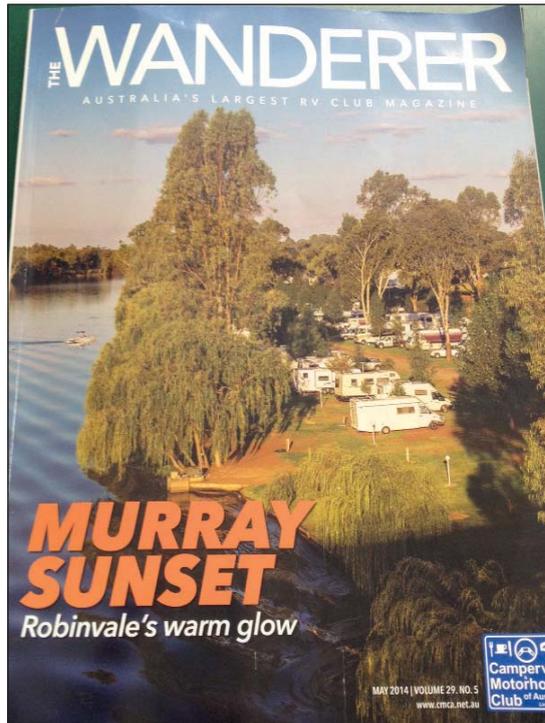
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Personal touches winning buyers

Sunliner boss reflects on four decades in business

KARL CONDON



DUST, DIRT & SAND

WITH KARL CONDON
& BRUCE MCMAHON

THE caravan and motorhome scene has changed a lot in 40 years.

Just ask Nick Hunter, general manager of Melbourne based Sunliner which this year, is celebrating its 40th anniversary. No longer is it a case of take it or leave it or bigger is best – a lot like the car industry. Nick says people now want to personalise their vans and motorhomes and they like it in a smaller package. They want a choice and manufacturers had better be prepared to give it to them or pay the consequences.

Another thing he believes in is quality. It's a case of the old

saying that you get what you pay for. There is no shortage of stories of cheap, even imported vans, made from lower quality material, breaking up under Australian conditions particularly when taken off a smooth road surface.

And lightweight European style models may be OK when towed by small sedans on autobahn-like roads but face it, if you want to explore this country there won't be many roads like that. Australian vans made from reputable, established manufacturers and tough components may cost more

but they are a no-brainer.

Living Outdoors has long believed this having chosen several years ago, a Queensland made off-road van that was not cheap but continues to do the job without hassles.

Nick believes that customers, at the price they now pay for vans and motorhomes, expect a personalised product.

"The biggest thing is that the industry is still evolving, as seen in the size of vans," he said. "We see customers looking at size. Bigger is no longer better. They want a more compact product and they want



choice. People were once told it's A B or C – even if it was a new, expensive Range Rover.”

Forty years is a long time in the caravan industry. Sunliner was founded by Nick's father in 1974 to produce innovative, premium recreational vehicles in Australia. It remains a family business that continues to producing quality product.

“Since the beginning we've had a commitment to craftsmanship and quality manufacturing that continues today,” he said. “We believe that this is the type of manufacturing that Australia does best, innovative design coupled with high end craftsmanship. It is unfortunate to see some parts of the manufacturing industry struggling in Australia.

“After a few tough years we can honestly say that not only are we surviving, we are thriving.”

Nick said the company's success demonstrated that Australians were willing to invest in premium local products.

“In our 40th successful year it would be great to see the Victorian and Federal governments focus their support on innovative manufacturing industries and companies and the RV industry,” he said.

“We are sustainable, internationally competitive and creating jobs in Australia while investing back into our local economy. Sunliner puts back in excess of \$30 mil to the local economy each year.”

Sunliner makes a range of motorhomes from the ute-based Ford Ranger up to a 32ft model and vans from 16ft-22ft, including off-road models.

sunliner.com.au

RV CONFERENCE

AUSTRALIA's peak national body for the caravan and camping industry, the Caravan, RV and Accommodation Industry of Australia (CRVA), has hosted a reception at the

Australian Embassy in Washington to promote the 2015 World RV Conference in Melbourne next February.

The event attracted more than 150 RV industry leaders from the United States.

CRVA chief executive officer Stuart Lamont said the US was the largest RV manufacturing region in the world and Australia exhibited many of the American industry's characteristics.

“Caravan and camping in Australia is a growing industry and the World RV Conference is an outstanding opportunity to support local product and showcase Australian innovation to the world,” he said. “The Australian caravanning industry manufactures to one of the toughest design standards in the world and many Australian caravan and holiday parks are market leaders globally.”

GRAMPIANS TREK

BOONAH-based Horizon Guides, which conducts a calendar of weekend and week-day walks in the Mt Barney and surrounding peaks of the Scenic Rim, is organising a 10-day trek through the spectacular scenery of Victoria's Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park.

Teresa Cause, who runs Horizon Guides, promises a walk among dramatic sandstone features and rich forests while exploring fascinating geological features around Volcano Country.

The adventure will delve into the history of the Shipwreck Coast and its spectacular landscape.

Highlights include; three days hiking in the Grampians, a visit to Brambuk Cultural Centre, hiking in Volcano

Country at Napier State Park and Mt Eccles National Park, a full day in Warrnambool to experience Flagstaff Hill maritime village, the Shipwreck

Coast and Great Ocean Road including Bay of Islands, London Bridge and Loch Ard Gorge walks, two full day hikes on the Great Ocean Walk and lodging at the Cape Otway Lightstation in the historic light keepers house and a light-house tour.

The fully accommodated tour will spend four nights at the self-contained Wartook Rise Lodge, two nights in Warrnambool at the Olde Maritime Inn, one night at the 12 Apostles Motel and Retreat and two nights at Cape Otway Lightstation.

Dates are Monday September 22 to Wednesday October 1 with nine night's accommodation. The level of challenge for the walks is moderate.

Price and twin share ex Melbourne Airport is to be advised and full details and tour cost will be available in the first week of August once the itinerary is finalised.

To register an interest email info@horzonguides.com.au Full walk details and booking information will be available on horzonguides.com.au

WINTER AT O'REILLY'S

O'REILLY's Rainforest Retreat in the Lamington National Park is offering a winter sale over the coming months which include pay two and get the third night free packages. Prices are from \$504 which normally goes for \$756.

Just the right time for cool, crisp mountain air, perfect walking conditions, log fires and spectacular sunsets.

O'Reilly's will also hold winter jazz weekends beginning tomorrow. The Nev Ollis Jazz Trio will play two free concerts, one tomorrow night from 6.30-9.30pm and Sunday night at O'Reilly's Canungra Valley Vineyards from 12.30-2.30pm.

oreillys.com.au

A WORLD APART



AN estimated 450 visitors had a great time at the Scenic Rim's A World Apart held on the May 24-25 weekend, many from the Gold Coast.

The food festival was held across five different properties, each with a unique local food, wine and art experience in perfect autumn weather about a 90 minute drive from the coast. They were all complemented by individual gardens to add to the enjoyment.

This was the seventh A World Apart and it was so successful that planning is already underway for next year's event, set down for the May 23-24 weekend.





The smart Sunliner Monte Carlo (above) and (below) a flashback to Sunliner's early days when VW Kombis ruled.



Bouquets for council

At their most recent council meeting, South Gippsland Shire showed their

support for the growing recreational vehicle market by giving the green light to keep Franklin River Reserve near Toora open as a free camping site.

Well done SGSC for promoting the good of the whole community and not just the benefit of a few.

Tourism is vitally important to our area and freedom of choice is the Australian right so visitors to our wonderful part of South Gippsland can continue to choose the method of camping they prefer - be it mainstream caravan parks or the joys of free camping, the choice is there for all!

I would also like to thank the council for allowing me the opportunity to air my views regarding my support for the RV Strategy Draft Report and for taking my comments into consideration.

As RV travellers are ever increasing in numbers and have a very large network base, it is important to local traders and businesses for the council to show its support and it is fantastic to see our shire keeping up with the times and making the effort to accommodate this growing market.

Tourism can make or break an area and we need to encourage as many visitors as possible by whatever means necessary to ensure all towns and businesses in our shire survive and benefit by the maximum amount.

Negative comments made by some so called locals should be taken with a grain of salt and let common sense prevail.

Karen Barwick, RV Traveller.



No RV impact on council parks

WHILE other private caravan parks in the South Gippsland Shire rallied against a council-developed Recreational Vehicle Strategy, which would encourage more 'free campers' staying overnight in towns rather than caravan park sites, the managers of council's own caravan parks said there would be limited impact.

"The impact to council's caravan parks is the same as private caravan parks," said Chris Van Der Ark, council's Property manager.

"We do not believe we have experienced an impact to site sales at our caravan parks.

"Any future impacts will be mitigated with a focus on the business plan, improvements to service delivery and marketing opportunities/event planning at the parks."

At its recent meeting, council-

lors voted to put in a sweetener for towns to become RV Friendly.

It included a \$3000 grant for towns to install blackwater dump sites and signage.

It came after heavy lobbying from the Foster community that had found funding for ongoing maintenance/management for a dumpsite and overnight parking in the town.

The Foster community was hoping council would intervene in a management issue over the Foster Station Park that would allow overnight RV visitors.

However, council's RV Strategy supports caravan park operators that already have dumpsites in the area.

The decision left Foster community members angry that they could be missing out on a new and growing sector of the tourism market.



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- Yours etc,

Karen Barwick,

RV traveller and Toora resident.



NO JOY AT VAN PARKS

TOM SNOWDON

THE state's peak body for caravan parks says many operators are frustrated with the uneven playing field affecting their operations.

"Some councils are opening camping spaces in these communities to offer cheap alternatives for travellers," Caravan Parks Association of Queensland operations manager Kristy Ponting said.

"But then they turn around and place tough regulations on the caravan parks that the council-run facilities don't have to adhere to."

Ms Ponting said many regulations were overreaching and impractical, considering how far self-contained motorhomes have evolved.

"Some parks are having to put in extra toilets and wash facilities when they're just not needed by a lot of the travellers stopping there," she said. "And

so they have to factor in these costs when it comes time to charge the consumer."

Overheads are a reason up to 20 tourist parks have been closing down every year in Australia for the past 15 years. But according to a report commissioned by the caravan industry of Australia, revenue for the surviving camping grounds is up by almost 7 per cent annually.

Combined Caravan Clubs of Queensland president Bob McKernon said fees to stay at camp grounds were too expensive. "A lot of these parks ... also cater more to family groups. Some of their amenities are brilliant, but we just don't need them," he said.

Mr McKernon said caravanners wanted access to free camp spots, showgrounds and caravan parks. He said the biggest trouble spots were coastal tourist areas and mining towns where caravan parks were already overcrowded.