



# Not under our noses

**Lakes Entrance is a camper friendly town, however it will not accept free camping to occur under the noses of local accommodation providers.**

Caravan park operators met with the Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association last Wednesday night, so LEADA would reject East Gippsland Shire Council's plans to trial free parking at sites in prime real estate in Lakes Entrance.

Caravan park providers agree and support free camping away from East Gippsland townships, but would not accept parking at the shire's planned Jemmys Point and Gippsland Lakes Fishing Club car park sites.

However, local park owners have said council has not listened to their feedback, instead running on its own agenda.

Riviera Country Caravan Park owner, Deb McTighe, who was part of a committee setup by shire to decide on the future of free camping, said the committee agreed to not run free camping trials within 15 kilometres of any caravan park.

•As far as I'm concerned, council didn't take on board what we said to them. We tried to work with them, and they've shafted caravan parks in Lakes Entrance.

•I'm not against RV-ers, but in a town with about 20

caravan parks, why would the shire want to put them in our town, under our nose?

•We pay a registration fees to the shire; it's set by State Government. Mine went up around 92 per cent. The shire collects the money, but what does it go towards?

•I thought the shire might have come to me, anyone else in the caravan park industry or LEADA, but they have not done that at all.

•How dare they do what they want to do in our town? she said.

LEADA, which encourages the economic benefits campers provide to Lakes Entrance, wants an area out of the immediate township that is basic, but suitable for campers (not tents) to use that will be known as a good destination around Australia.

It also wants the area to be close enough to town that they can explore the area and continue to contribute to the economy.

•We realise the need for a designated area, so it can be policed properly, but we also want it in an area that is attractive, and in a position that will not adversely affect local caravan parks, LEADA president, Alison Brewer, said.

Park operators identified a list of problems that free camping ... in townships ... would create.

They involve issues with

waste disposal, safety regulations, locations and compliance, while operators said free camping would work to the detriment of their business.

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More than 30 volunteers helped clean up Metung as part of Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday. Despite the damp start, 56 bags of general rubbish and half a trailer of dumped tyres and larger bits of metal and wood were cleaned up. Event coordinator, Anne Bell, said due to the lack of rubbish bins around Patterson Park and the Village Green, 173 cigarette butts were picked by just two volunteers. A barbecue hosted by the Friends of Metung was held afterwards. More photos inside. PICTURED: Bev Pinnow ventured to the Metung Wharf to play her part in the clean up. K261-8



# Designated RV area is needed

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It's an industry-wide problem. It has destroyed Queensland parks, Silver Sands Tourist Park operator, Terry Simmons, said.

John Griffiths, of Lakes Ponderosa Holiday Park and Cabins, said free camping zones would not actually comply with council's own regulations.

"There's no emergency management plan in force, no assembly area, no fire services, there's no security," Mr Griffiths said.

"I believe it would be a retrograde step to the town, and I think it's a naive proposal.

"I specifically request this committee to look at it in that light," he told LEADA.

"Everyone in attendance agreed that there needs to be a designated area for RVs and other methods of camping who choose not to stay at a local caravan park, but not in areas such as fishing club car park near Bullock Island," Mrs Brewer said.

"This is a very important issue and affects everyone in Lakes Entrance one way or the other.

LEADA has since emailed its

members with a link to a survey on free camping "to ensure they get an accurate consensus of all members' view on this matter".

LEADA members counted 13 vans illegally parked near Gippsland Lakes Fishing Club before last Wednesday night's meeting.

They also believe the Lakes Entrance Visitor Information Centre has suggested using free camping sites to tourists before the trial has started.

## POSITIVES

Lakes Car and Boat Wash owner, Ron Garth, told the *Post* there are positives to having the number of campervans come through the town.

"We are virtually like a second information centre," he said of his car wash business.

"They always ask 'Where is the best seafood dinner, where are the best restaurants', and I reckon they spend lots in town," he said.

"We quite often get campervans coming through, and Wicked vans all the time.

"They come in and wash their vans here. They spend money in the town as far as I'm concerned."



# \$2m economy boost expected

By Elle Vince

MURRAY Bridge's economy can expect to receive an injection of more than \$2 million next month when it hosts the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's 29th Anniversary Rally.

The week-long event is set to attract about 800 motorhomes and more than 1500 people from around Australia, with some of them arriving as early as this week.

Referring to previous rally figures, the Murray Bridge council is quite confident about \$2-\$2.4 million will be spent at petrol stations, supermarkets, mechanics and motorhome maintenance businesses around the city.

Mayor Brenton Lewis said he hoped by hosting the rally, and being an RV-friendly town, some of the visitors would also return after the rally or stay longer, bringing in more money for local businesses.

"It's a bonus to get that number of people

from all parts of Australia to come into Murray Bridge," he said.

"We would be foolish if we didn't think it was a great opportunity to showcase the region.

"There might be a few pressure points, but overall I think we will cope with it and I think we are ready for it."

Murray Bridge Rally managers Lyn and David Fricke have already settled into the city, organising events and entertainment before their acquaintances arrive.

Mr Fricke said one of the main attractions for local residents would be the rally's open day, which would be held on Saturday, April 25.

"Most of the stalls at the open day will be related to travelling and camping, or life on the road," he said.

"With about 800 motorhomes on site, they (locals) can walk around and talk to people about motorhom-



**Ready to rally:** Motorhome Club of Australia's rally managers Lyn and David Fricke have settled into Murray Bridge, ahead of the Motorhome Rally in April.

"It's also a chance to check out some of the latest motorhomes ... and to see such a variety of different types of RV vehicle."

- Details: The rally will be held at the

Unity College grounds from April 19 to 26. Locals are invited to attend the rally's open day for a gold coin donation, from 10am to 4pm on April 25, Anzac Day.



**Glorious:** Beautiful day for a drive on the beach.

Photo: Kristy Walsh

# Off road group finalised

COUNCIL has endorsed the appointment of members to the Off Road Vehicle Working Party (ORVWP). This group will be an advisory committee that will make recommendations to Council regarding the sustainable and safe use of off road recreational vehicles on land within the Shire of Esperance.

The following persons were appointed: Shire councillors: Basil Parker and Rob Horan with Lara McIntyre as deputy; Esperance Police: Senior Sergeant Richard Moore with Sergeant James Reid as deputy; Dept. Parks and Wildlife: Robert Block with Ian Hughes as deputy

Community Reps: Brett Thorpe, Tim Hawkey,

Jessica Jolley, Kristy Walsh with Ian Hartley as deputy.

Deputies will attend meetings on behalf of members who are unable to be present.

A meeting will be called during the month of March to commence discussions on how the group will proceed.

Council would like to thank everyone who nominated for the committee and hope the interest and passion displayed in the community will continue. All off road vehicle and beach users are encouraged to contact representatives on the ORVWP and provide input, assist in identifying issues and help develop potential solutions.



# Free camping leads tourists to Portland

**BEN FRASER**

CAMPERS are praising Glenelg Shire for providing free campsites to travellers, and say, they in turn injected thousands of dollars into local businesses.

The Henty Park campers said free-to-low cost camping attracts tourists to stop, refuel and relax, while expensive sites force visitors to move to the next town.

About 15 campervans were spread out behind the Portland Cable Trams' depot, making the most of the beautiful weather.

One group, travelling from Coffs Harbour, said they were rapt with the facilities available at the site.

"We came here from Lorne and the site there was terrible; you couldn't park your car next to the campervan or even open the awning. We were packed like sardines," said Steve Barley.

The group were critical of some council owned-and-run campsites where the primary concern appeared to be profit rather than the experience.

"In Coffs Harbour they have basically driven out traditional campers. It's all about expensive motel apartments.

"A lot of people we have spoken just to drive straight by Coffs Harbour and stay elsewhere. That means no one stops for petrol; no one spends money in that place."

In a growing trend, the group were using the Internet to find new places to stay.

"We found this place on WikiCamps and decided to stay for the night."

WikiCamps, an application for iOS, Android and Windows 8.1, has more than 18100 sites listed

and uses crowdsourcing for information and reviews.

"This site isn't listed in any camp book, so if it wasn't for the application, we might have driven through to another place."

While they stopped, the group spent more than \$3000 on fuel, food and repaired a portable fridge.

"We spent a lot of time at (Portland) Disposals; it's one of the best places we have ever visited.

"We also visited a local café (Bahloo), and the RSL, who have some very good Guinness on tap," Mr Barley added with a laugh.

"We're quite self-sufficient now; we carry our own water, uses solar panels, and dispose of grey water at the correct locations.

"So this site is ideal; lots of room and reasonably quiet."

SEASONED travellers Sue and Steve Barley were full of praise for Portland's free camp sites.

Picture: ELLY HATELEY 150303eh02





## INFORMATION CENTRE MOVE TO TOWN HALL SPARKS CONCERN

# TOURIST PARKING WOES

**NICOLE CAIRNS AND  
MELISSA CUNNINGHAM**

A PEAK tourist body fears the relocation of the Ballarat Visitor Information Centre to the town hall will hurt tourist numbers unless the parking situation at the new location is not radically improved.

Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia member and Ballarat resident Grant Tillett said he feared tourists would simply pass through the city if a

lack of accessibility for larger vehicles at the town hall was not addressed.

Pressure is mounting on the council to address parking issues, with the Visitor Information Centre earmarked to move to the town hall in May.

Initially, the council voiced plans

to widen Armstrong Street in a bid to improve accessibility for larger scale vehicles after a relocation of the centre, from Lydiard Street North to the town hall, was given the nod in September.

However, in a report to be considered by councillors at a meeting on Wednesday night, it was revealed those works "may not be required".

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## Tourist parking concerns

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No alternatives have been outlined but the council's city strategy general manager Natalie Reiter said in the report officers will investigate other alternatives to address parking issues at the site.

Mr Tillett has dubbed the move "ludicrous".

"From a practical point of view it simply will not work no matter how you design it," he said.

"It has not worked in the past and it will not work in the future. A very large motorhome could not fit down Lydiard Street and it's got absolutely no chance of parking in Sturt or Armstrong streets."

Mr Tillett said he was not opposed to the centre's head office being housed inside the town hall but he believed there was also a need for an additional satellite centre alongside Lake Wendouree.

He said without a more-vehicle-friendly site, tourism for the trend of emerging "fifth-wheel vehicles" in Ballarat will diminish.

"The main business district of Ballarat is just not the right place for caravans, motorhomes or any large-scale vehicles to park," he said.

"Parking in the city's centre should be prioritised for people who work there, and there is plenty of space for another facility in the vicinity of the Ballarat Botanical gardens."

Originally, the town hall's west wing was to be the new home of the centre, but those plans have been scrapped.

Instead, the centre will be situated in the east wing of the building, near the foyer on Bath Lane, as it has greater disability access from the rear car park.

The council has also outlined plans to appoint architectural firm Morton Dunn to guide the design and fitout inside the town hall.

At the council meeting on Wednesday night, councillors are expected vote in favour of formalising an agreement for Ballarat Regional Tourism to lease the section of the town hall.

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