

RV travellers welcome

SIR, - I read with great interest Ms Brown's comments in 'The Mirror' last week and felt compelled to put pen to paper to share my views on the 'Free camping at what cost?' article.

I was quite stunned, you might say, as to what observations Ms Brown bases her description of the Franklin River Reserve on and how she arrived at this assessment of such a little gem in our community.

I reside opposite the reserve in question and am almost a daily visitor to this beautiful little niche just west of Toora. I walk the length and breadth of this area so regularly that I am very familiar with the condition of the reserve and I can say without hesitation that it has never ever been left unsightly with rubbish from those visitors to our regions camping in the vicinity nor has it been degraded or defiled by recreational vehicle users or those travelling around our country from foreign shores.

The majority of RV campers travel fully equipped with toilets, showers, their own power, etc, so have no need of the amenities provided in a structured caravan park and stringently adhere to the rule of leaving a camp as you find it, devoid of rubbish.

The reserve is open to everyone, visitors and locals alike. Neither

group has precedence over the other, and I, for one, have never felt unwelcome or at odds with any other users of the area - quite the contrary. I've personally spoken to hundreds of visitors and a great many locals and have been very impressed with their comments about the reserve and their desire to support the local businesses and surrounding vicinity while they are camping there.

I have to admit I was quite flabbergasted by Ms Brown's financial statements. Although hypothetically they may be correct, does Ms Brown seriously believe that closing down the free camping and forcing people out of the reserve will automatically make them come and stay at her caravan park? I think not!!

A lot of RV travellers have worked long and hard all their lives entitling them to spend their retirement the way they want touring this wonderful country of ours and it is their God given right to spend their money how and where they want to and if they choose not to spend their time in costly caravan parks then so be it.

There are literally hundreds of thousands of holiday makers who do wish to spend their time in caravan parks, but give everybody the choice to enjoy their holidays how they want to,

not how you want them to. This is Australia, after all, and there is freedom of choice, remember, so surely there is enough of the tourist dollar for everyone without resorting to petty feuding. Do you really want to force visitors away from our area, Ms Brown? I believe if you close down camping at the reserve you will put another nail in the coffin of a small town, something no community minded person would tolerate.

Recreational vehicles, grey nomads and overseas tourists are rapidly growing in numbers and it is my opinion that we should be encouraging them to come to our corner of Victoria. Thankfully, the Council in its forward thinking has provided an area that is available at minimal cost.

From my observations, Franklin River Reserve is visited by scores of passing motorists daily, not only in cars but trucks, articulated vehicles, buses and such because there is access for these larger vehicles to park and I applaud the council for maintaining the area and making it so user friendly. I'm sure if Council was to upgrade any of the facilities at any time in the future then a user pays contribution would be expected.

Yours etc,

Future RV traveller
Kaz Barwick,
Toora.



Poll ends neck-and-neck on illegal camping in Bay

■ Kendall Makea

THE Fraser Coast community is opposed to letting tourists camp for free in Esplanade car parks, but only by a narrow margin, according to the Chronicle's online poll.

The poll closed at noon yesterday after more than 420 votes had been cast with 51% against illegal free camping in Hervey Bay.

Free camping groups, following the Chronicle's coverage of the issue, have raised concerns about the illegal camping debate online and through petitions.

Online group Freedom of Choice Camping does not condone illegal camping but speaks out against having no alternative to regional caravan parks.

Freedom of Choice Camping site administrators Lorraine Smith and Collin Bal-

four emphasise their participation in legal and environmentally conscious practices and the benefit these members can bring to local economies.

Collin believes that the less money spent on staying in caravan parks on amenities that aren't required for these mobile homes, the more can be invested into the community elsewhere.

Residents of areas prone to illegal campers however, continue to call for a solution for campers referred to as "Whiz bangs," by Collin Balfour, which refers to irresponsible campers who cause disturbance and are less environmentally aware.

➤ [Read more](#) about the illegal camping debate – head to www.frasercoastchronicle.com.au.



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Rally should benefit town and beyond

By **SARAH PRICE**

A CAMPERVAN and motorhome rally planned to take place on the Tomaree Peninsula in October is expected to attract thousands of people and inject more than \$2 million into the area.

Port Stephens Council was expected to support the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's rally at Tuesday's council meeting with plans to provide \$20,000 in sponsorship.

The sponsorship would come on top of council approving the use of the Tomaree Sports Complex for hire free of charge, but the club has agreed to a \$10,000 donation to go towards field upgrades at the sporting complex.

Ross Smart, the council's economic development and communications section manager, wrote in his report to the council that the event would have a flow-on effect

throughout the town.

"The rally will be the largest single event ever staged in the Nelson Bay-Tomaree Peninsula area due to its size and duration and will deliver significant economic impact," he stated in the report.

"In addition, towns across the region are also expected to benefit with staging areas to be set up to allow for the orderly ingress and egress of participants in the days leading up to and post the event."

More than 1000 motor homes and campervans are expected to attend, with an estimated 2000 visitors staying a minimum of seven nights.

The council's tourism and events section has been working closely with the club for more than 12 months to secure and plan for the event. Councillors were to vote on the matter on Tuesday night.

LEISURE TRIP: Toowoomba folk adopt caravanning as a way to travel

See the country in your home away from home

Nick Houghton

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TOOWOOMBA is quickly becoming the caravan and campervan capital of Queensland, according to numbers released by the Caravan, RV and Accommodation Industry of Australia.

The Garden City topped the list of caravan and campervan ownership with more Toowoomba locals buying camping trailers than ever before.

It's not a surprise for Newtown resident and caravanning enthusiast Ian Mackenzie.

"Caravanning is a great way to see the country," Mr Mackenzie said.

"I bought my first caravan in 1994 and it has given my wife and me the opportunity to go on some truly wonderful trips.

"It is a great pastime and an even better way to meet new people and explore."

Mr Mackenzie, the Toowoomba and Golden West Caravan Club president, said his advice for new caravan owners was to make sure you use it.

"So many people buy a caravan and it just sits in their front yard,"

he said.

"The trick is to do lots of short trips and really enjoy the benefits of being a caravan owner."

Selling caravans in Toowoomba for more than 20 years, Clem Young Caravan's owner Clem Young said caravan ownership has always been popular in the region.

"People have always been interested in purchasing caravans in Toowoomba," Mr Young said.

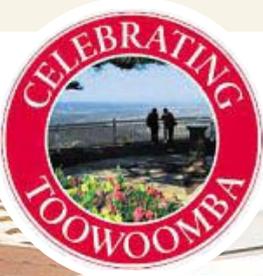
"Over the years business has always been pretty consistent.

"Mainly it is older couples and retirees. However, sometimes you have younger buyers.

"You see so much of the country when you caravan and it is why I think it is a great way to travel."

CARAVAN AND CAMPERVAN REPORT FINDINGS

- There are 502,025 registered caravan and campervans registered in Australia
- Toowoomba leads Queensland in ownership ahead of Bundaberg and the Fraser Coast.
- Mandurah in WA has the most caravan ownership in the country.
- In 2012 campervan owners in Australia covered more than 255 million kilometres.



LEISURE TRIP: Toowoomba folk adopt caravanning as a way to travel



SEASONED TRAVELLER: Toowoomba and Golden West Caravan Club president Ian Mackenzie is a passionate caravan owner.

PHOTO: NEV MADSEN



City ahead of curve on caravan ownership

MORE people in Gladstone are ditching the swag for swagger.

In a 12-month period, Gladstone has seen a remarkable increase in caravan and campervan ownership.

According to figures released by Caravan, RV & Accommodation Industry of Australia, the city has seen a 13.2% increase from 2012 to 2013.

The figures reflect trends

throughout the country.

Australia as a whole has experienced an increase in caravan and campervan registrations, reaching a combined total of 502,025.

Between January 31, 2011, and January 31, 2012, the number increased by 27,219 vehicles or 5.73%.

Caravans make up 89% of all registrations, and campervans 11%.

It seems more travellers are opting for comfort over camping, with visitors to tourist and national parks also on the rise.

In 2012, about 255 million kilometres was travelled by all caravans.

This represents an average of about 5000km each.

A survey of 1500 holiday makers provided an insight into the caravanning culture in

Queensland.

Of those interviewed, 18% said protection from the elements was a determining factor in their choice to purchase a caravan.

Another 38% of caravanners suggested portability and creature comforts such as beds, showers and cooking facilities were the most important aspect of their decision.



Just part of nation on go

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\$3m to create biking mecca

Councillor pushes plan

By CLARE COLLEY

DREAMS of transforming the Lake Canobolas and Mount Canobolas area into a mountain biking mecca, with a camping ground, and RV park, could be closer to becoming a reality.

Cr Reg Kidd wants his fellow councillors to spend up to \$1 million on the project in this year's budget and follow it up with a further \$2 million next year.

Central West Off-Road Bicycle Club president Scott Charlton last month floated the idea of investing

in mountain biking as a new industry to aid Orange's post-Electrolux recovery.

Cr Kidd backs the idea but has even grander plans, with hopes the council could create a permanent camping ground for seasonal workers, a site for RV vehicles, offer funds

towards an upgrade of the Scout camp and reopen the lake's historic pump house to tourists.

He believes it would fit in with the council's jobs strategy to create opportunities for redundant

Electrolux workers.

"I am sure there would be something for everybody in such development," he said.

"It would set us apart as a recreational centre of excellence that would lead to increased employment, increased tourism, and increased income into the area."

Cr Kidd downplayed concerns bringing more people to the precinct would impact the environment.

"We've got a beautiful area out there, you can still enjoy the



ambiance of the ecosystem,” he said.

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Councillor dreams of mountain bike mecca

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“It’s no good having a pristine area no one can enjoy. The best way to preserve it is to have people enjoying it.”

Cr Kidd believes the council’s investment would be leverage to attract state and federal government grants, and work on the area would bring employment and training opportunities.

He warned against the use of external consultants conducting feasibility studies into the project, saying the bicycle club’s proposal was

based on sound research with comparisons to similar ventures.

But his dreams could hit a roadblock with his fellow councillors who will all have their own wish lists come budget time.

Cr Kidd said in the lead-up to the budget there had been talk of millions of dollars for a rectangular field, but he wanted the project factored into the council’s future plans now.

Towac Park, a southern feeder road and

planetarium are all likely to compete as priorities for council funds.

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