



## Free guides have it all – and more!

**T**HE NSW Caravan and Camping Industry Association has released its Caravan & Camping Holiday Guide 2016 and the National Caravan and Recreational Vehicle Towing Guide.

“Aussies love caravan and camping holidays and these publications can help you plan your next trip,” said association chief executive Lyndel Gray.

The guide provides a full range of accommodation options, from campsites, family and pet-friendly parks, to cabin options for any budget.

There’s information on more than 350 CCIA member parks across NSW, as well as dealerships and suppliers selling all the latest products, with information on where to get your RV serviced or repaired.



Now in its seventh edition, the National Caravan and Recreational Vehicle Towing Guide is another great resource for anyone thinking of taking to the road with their caravan, camper trailer, campervan, motorhome, pop-top or tent trailer.

Available through the CCIA NSW website, it’s an invaluable resource and provides lots of technical information, safety guides, hints and towing tips.

Visitors to the NSW Caravan, Camping & Holiday Supershow at Rosehill Racecourse from April 9-17 will be able to pick up a hard copy of the guides.

■ [www.caravan-camping.com.au](http://www.caravan-camping.com.au)



# Motorhomes set for rally

**BY MARCUS MARROW**

STAWELL will play host to the Victorian Combined Chapters Motorhome Rally in September.

The Motorhome Rally will be conducted at the Stawell Harness Racing Club grounds at Laidlaw Park.

There are quite a few motorhomes around Australia and our numbers are increasing. All chapters belong to the CMCA (Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia).

The CMCA hold two national rallies each year at different locations throughout Australia. As well as that some states hold their own rallies. This time around, Stawell was seen as a great place to hold the Victorian Rally.

Motorhomes come in all shapes, configurations and sizes from a little pop top Hiace to some very large coach conversions, from Swagmans to ute slide-ons and everything in between.

The venue will accommodate up to 380 motorhomes which will equate to about 700 people spending time in

town for the week of the rally and probably before and after the event.

Christine Greenwood has been given the privilege to be Rally Manager for the Stawell rally.

Ms Greenwood has an amazing local support team as well, to help her with this event.

For the last seven months, Ms Greenwood has been visiting Stawell to meet with

Barry Marrow, Ian Nicholson, Col and Kathy Simpson and Chris Waack, who are all willing to give some time to help make this an event to remember - with maybe a repeat in the future!

Ms Greenwood and her husband Greg spent six weeks travelling across the Nullarbor to Albany, Western Australia to the last National Rally, where they were able to promote the Stawell rally.

More importantly, to promote Stawell township.

This year's two national rallies are Bathurst in April and Canberra in October.

One of Ms Greenwood's objectives in Albany was to convince Western Australians, and motorhomers who are on the road full time, to come early to Stawell in September on the way to Canberra in October.

Ms Greenwood will be going to the Bathurst rally and telling members how magic Stawell is and why they should come and spend some time in Stawell before and after the rally. They also took their promotion to Wagga Wagga in New South Wales at Easter.

On Saturday, September 10, the gates will be open to the public to come and look around and see the motorhomes. There will also be a market and other attractions to see.

Ms Greenwood is hoping to get to know many Stawell people by the time September rolls around.

"I am very excited about this event which is shaping up to be magical," she said.



**RALLYING:** Lyn and Bill Daglish, Sue and Russell Flentjar, Col Simpson, Christine and Greg Greenwood at Laidlaw Park gearing up for the Victorian Combined Chapters Motorhome Rally in Stawell in September.



# RV strategy aims to boost local tourism

**Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) is hoping to build visitor numbers and extend the length of time Recreational Vehicle (RV) travellers spend in the Region with its new RV Strategy.**

Release of the new strategy coincides with the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia's (CMCA) imminent listing of Clifton as an "RV Friendly" town.

Members of the Clifton and Districts Chamber of Commerce and Industry have been given details of Council's new RV Strategy which aims to bring more tourists into the Region.

The Chamber's March meeting was addressed by TRC Tourism Development Officer, Rhiannon Priestley, who outlined the aims, operation and proposed progress of the strategy.

Ms Priestley said the primary objective of the strategy is to provide a framework to encourage RVs to visit the Region and to ensure that Council's assets are managed safely and sustainably.

It is envisaged that this will enhance the experience for visitors and increase their expenditure and length of stay.

Currently the average length of stay in the Region is 1.8 nights.

Ms Priestley said the strategy acknowledges private operators and aims to ensure that both private business needs and RV user needs are managed and balanced appropriately.

It is proposed to

develop a Regional Camping Reference Group and seven Local Camping Reference Groups across the Region to assist the strategy.

The Local Groups will be in Toowoomba, Clifton, Pittsworth, Millmerran, Oakey, Crows Nest and Yarraman.

Expressions of Interest will be sought from residents wanting to be part of the Local Groups.

All new RV and camping site proposals for Council owned land will be discussed by the Local Groups, then by the Regional Group.

The process will include an assessment to determine the need of a site based on occupancy, offer and a cost benefit analysis.

It has also been suggested that there be a twelve months' trial of a "receipts box".

Visitors would be encouraged to place their receipts from local businesses in the box to help TRC quantify the

economic impact of RV visitors.

Ms Priestley said the strategy points out that the current legal framework for managing camping in the Toowoomba Region needs to be amended to provide a consistent approach.

She said it recommends

that amendments be made to local laws to facilitate a more consistent and clear approach to camping in the Region.

## TOURISM AND EVENTS STRATEGY

During her address to the local Chamber of Commerce, Rhiannon Priestley also discussed the Council's Tourism and Events Strategy.

The aim of this is to grow the tourism market in the Region by \$41.8 million by the year 2020.

The target markets identified in this strategy are Conference and Business Events; Sporting Events; Visiting Friends and Relatives; Asia, New Zealand; and Nature-Based tourism.

Ms Priestley sparked interest among Chamber members when she mentioned that agritourism is an area which could bring tourists into areas such as Clifton.

It is intended to start a tourism database to identify various things such as the Region's attractions, experiences, local produce, local stories and fun facts.

To do this successfully, it is hoped to gain considerable input from local individuals and organisations across the Region.

Each community will be asked to identify and communicate the unique tourism experiences it can offer.

As part of the promotion of the various areas a Toowoomba Region Guide will be produced.

The whole process aims to tie in with the Southern Queensland Country "Hero Experiences" campaign, which covers natural beauty, history and heritage, the four distinct seasons we experience, and authentic country life.



Locals with a keen interest in the new RV Strategy, Vaughan Pauli and Karen Ferguson of Eastern Downs Storage and Stopover and Clifton Railway Station Convenor Cynthia Conway (right) talking with TRC Tourism Development Officer Rhiannon Priestly (second from left).



# Nomads in town

## Travellers enjoy benefits of free camping area

By **Libby Price**

Like it or lump it, the shores of Lake Benalla have become a caravanning paradise for grey nomads.

They call it "leave no trace": free camping sites for fully self-contained caravans and motor homes.

In the past week, scores of them have doffed the lawns in front of the library car park and skate park.

Grey nomads Peter and Janet Watters have been on the road for two months in their top-of-the-range motor home, which tows a small vehicle so they can easily get out and about when they stop in a town.

Having seen Tasmania, they're now on their way home to Dubbo in NSW.

Mrs Watters found out about Benalla on a caravanning website.

"We got to Melbourne and thought, which way are we going to go home and we'd never been to Benalla, so we thought Benalla was the place to come and have a look at," Mr Watters said.

The couple had not heard about the street art, but thought it was an excellent attraction for the town.

"That's a great drawcard. That's what little towns need to do

to promote 'old buggers' like us coming here and spending a dollar," Mr Watters said.

"It's free camping, it's not a caravan park. There's a lot of little towns like this (that have free camping) and that's why they do it, because it brings people in.

"I come from a town (Dubbo) that's 'RV not-friendly' (recreational vehicle).

And they just don't want to know about it, and you'll find most bigger cities don't want to know about it because they just say, 'we've got a big enough population, we don't want the hassle.'

"What this is called, is 'leave no trace' and you're fully self contained."

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# Nomads make the most of lake sites

## ● Continued from page 1

“Everybody’s got their own shower and toilet,” Mr Watters said.

“What they should have is a dump site (a facility to take caravan effluent) right here.”

Laurie and Leigh have travelled around Victoria, to South Australia, up the “centre” and are now heading home to Tamworth.

They found out about the free camping on the Lake by word of mouth.

“Some fella was filling up (his caravan tanks) with water at the information centre and he told me there’s a free camp site, because we were going on to Wangaratta and Glenrowan because we’ve got to have a look around there anyhow, and we thought, we’d stop here then,” Laurie said.

Mr Watters said the travellers brought a lot of money into towns.

“In 24 hours I’ve spent in the vicinity of \$200. I went to your bottle shop, I went to your baker shop, I went to your supermarket, so I’ve stocked up a lot of stuff,” he said.

Mr Watters’ favourite story of how grey nomads could spend up big was about the man who decided to upgrade his 4WD.

One very lucky car dealer was

\$65 000 better off after his “impulse” buy.

“If Benalla council were to approach the Camper Van Motor Home Club of Australia and become an RV friendly town, you are displayed in many books and literature and everything, right across all us grey nomads and we find it very easily and that particular club would also contribute to a dump site being put in a place like this,” Mr Watters said.

“You just need someone from council to get in touch with them and say, ‘listen, we want to be an RV friendly town,’ and you’d have a sign as you come into town saying, ‘we are RV friendly’ and what that means is you supply this sort of a place, you give water to fill your tanks, and possibly a dump site and the council would get a lot of benefit from that and the townspeople their businesses would love it.”

When approached by *The Ensign* for comment, Benalla Rural City Council chief executive officer Tony McIlroy issued the following statement:

“The council currently applies

no fees to vehicles parked around Lake Benalla, including the Lake Benalla Foreshore Reserve,” Mr McIlroy said.

“There has been no change to this. The Lake Benalla Foreshore Reserve has traditionally been used as an area for short-term day relief.

“We are aware that there has been a recent increase in the use of the space, including by overnight campers, as a result of a listing on an RV tourism website.

“The council is considering this increased use and the associated social and environmental impacts, in relation to its Local Laws.”



**Out in force:** Leave-no-trace caravanners Peter and Janet Watters loved their short stay in Benalla, parked on the foreshore next to the library.



**Invasion of the grey nomads:** Scores of camper vans looking out over Lake Benalla.