



Council to consider proposal for Pioneer Park **Free camp trial likely**

FIONA HENDERSON

A PROPOSAL for a 12-month freedom camping trial at Wendouree's Pioneer Park has been welcomed by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia.

The plan includes a maximum stay of one to two nights, limiting it to one site only and not having any services available.

It will go before Wednesday night's Ballarat City Council meeting.

CMCA representative Grant

Tillett said he was "very happy" with the recommendation.

"Statistics show 16 per cent of people with RV equipment will just not go into a caravan park and we're happy to get that custom," Mr Tillett said.

"It will be at no cost to the community at all."

A further clause allows for the council to cancel the trial

if it is having a detrimental impact on local caravan parks or Pioneer Park and its surrounds.

However, Mr Tillett said the CMCA would halt the trial if it was being abused.

"If we can't control it, we'll cancel it."

Freedom camping originated in New Zealand and involves free overnight camping for self-contained vehicles.

A second proposal to go before the council endorses a

12-month trial for four Ballarat caravan parks to allow visitors to use dump point facilities for

free.

The council would compensate the participating caravan park operators \$10 each time their dump point is used for up to a total of 400 uses.

Mr Tillett said the plan was "acceptable" but the CMCA would have preferred a stand-alone dump point.

"However, this was a compromise suggested by council and it would be churlish not to accept that compromise."

The four caravan parks are the Big 4 Ballarat Goldfields Holiday Park, the Big 4 Ballarat Welcome Stranger Holiday Park, the Big 4 Ballarat Windmill Holiday Park and the Eureka Stockade Holiday Park.

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Ballarat needs to be more camper friendly

WITH regard to the article of Tuesday, August 8 on the council considering camping proposals.

As a resident of Ballarat, and member of a National Caravan Association, I would like to make a few points for the consideration of the council.

Ballarat at present is not high on the places of interest to visit by caravans and motorhomes due to the total lack of long vehicle parking in the CBD.

There is, of course, one or two hard-to-find places outside the Civic Hall in Mair Street and one can always park at Sovereign Hill if blowing your budget with a day visit to that facility.

People need to be aware that the average spend when caravanning is around \$150 per day on fuel, food and attractions.

The nearest 'free camp' is about 20km from Ballarat and if staying there overnight not many would be prepared to unhitch their van and leave it unattended to return to Ballarat to go sightseeing or shopping.

This means the traders of Ballarat are losing the tourist dollar that will be spent elsewhere.

The concept of free camping is not to deprive the local tourist parks of income but to encourage the traveller to stop and spend in our town.

Most free camps have a time restriction of 24-48 hours to prevent exploitation of the facilities.

This is better than having the traveller drive past Ballarat without stopping.

If multiple-night stays are anticipated then the traveller will book into a tourist park.

The park operators who oppose this idea would do well to remember they are in direct competition with motels and hotels, and a free overnight in Ballarat would benefit

many people. Many towns in Victoria actively encourage overnight stays in their town for the benefit of the local shopkeepers.

Some have even registered as RV-friendly towns that brings increased revenue.

Registration requires long vehicle parking close to the shopping

facilities as one of the criteria for such registration.

Caravan clubs encourage their members to stop and spend in these RV-friendly towns.

An overnight stop at Victoria Park, while not ideal, would encourage people to stop and look at what we have to offer in Ballarat, as would long vehicle parking in the lower section of Sturt Street.

The number of vans and motorhomes entering Ballarat per day can be counted on one hand, yet the number of vans travelling along the M8 and the A300 is 10 times that number.

A dump point located near the toilets in Victoria park would also attract the traveller and negate the need to have park operators agree to allow their dump point to be used free.

The cost of such an installation would be small compared to the parking space reduction carried out recently in Armstrong Street.

Let's drag Ballarat out of the 1850s and into the 21st century and put us on the tourism map to the benefit of us all.

STEWART MASTERS
Mt Clear



Camp fines prove costly to travellers

ANGELIQUE PATTERSON

IN JUST over two months Douglas Shire Council has issued 105 warnings and 13 fines for illegal camping, while travelling holiday-makers want cheaper options.

DSC planning and environment manager Donna Graham spoke about illegal camping, when people camp out in their tents/cars/campervans in car parks, at beaches and parks, instead of checking in to accommodation.

She said Council conducts regular target patrols from Wangetti through to Cape Tribulation.

“Since May 28 this year, Council has issued 13 fines and 105 warnings for illegal camping as a result of these regular targeted patrols,” she said.

“Many more warnings have been issued as a result of Local Laws officers conducting their normal duties. The fine for illegal camping in the Douglas Shire is \$227.70 per offence.”

Illegal campers are provided with a fact sheet detailing legal campsites throughout the Shire and are encouraged to use those facilities, to avoid being fined.

Travelling holiday-makers from Exmouth in Western Australia, Grant Rowsell and Silvia Mutzl said they have been on the road for 10 months and Queensland is bad for not allowing camping anywhere.

“In Western Australia you can go anywhere but Perth. As soon as you go south or north of Perth you can pull up anywhere and it doesn’t have to be an RV-friendly place,” Mr Rowsell said.

“At the moment when we think about Port Douglas we think of resorts.”

Currently the Wonga Beach caravan park is own by DSC with a caretaker, the Mossman caravan park and pool and also Tropic Breeze caravan park in Port Douglas are owned by Council and leased out on a commercial arrangement.

But Mr Rowsell and Ms Mutzl believe these places are too expensive.

“We got slogged here \$40 one night because all we wanted to do was roll out the swags and do our washing,” Ms Mutzl said. “In Mission Beach it was brilliant, it was \$12 per head per night at a Council caravan park and it was always booked out.”

“Volunteers come and clean and the money raised from the park goes back into the community, which is great.”



Upgrade to improve park

COOLUM Beach Holiday Park is about to undergo a \$520,000 upgrade, with most of the work to be completed before the September school holidays.

The upgrade will see 70 small sites averaging 64sq m converted to 46 larger sites averaging 100sq m.

Councillor Stephen Robinson said the project would help meet the demand for larger, well-drained sites to cater for today's larger campervans and motorhomes.

"These sites are in premium locations within the camping grounds, as they are located closest to the beach," he said.

"The upgrades will include power, water and sullage points for grey water. Internal roads will be sealed and, together with other drainage works, this will be an all-weather camping and caravan park."

The park is set on 4ha with direct access to the patrolled surf, making it one

of the Sunshine Coast's most popular camping and

caravan destinations.

Coolum and Mudjimba are the only council-owned, dog-friendly family holiday parks on the Sunshine Coast but visitors must apply to the park operator before arriving.

The latest upgrades are in addition to the new amenity building, which replaced the old block in 2012.

Caravan Industry Association of Australia spokeswoman Callie Henderson said the Sunshine Coast was a famous holiday spot for caravanners and campers, not only for the beautiful weather, but for the sense of community found in caravan and holiday parks.

"We are delighted that the new developments to the Coolum Beach Holiday Park will add value to the park for the local community and for the community of campers that come to stay throughout the year," Ms Henderson said.



FAST FACTS

- More than 10,000,000 site nights were spent in Queensland's caravanning and camping sector in the year ending March 2014
- Expenditure by caravanning and camping consumers is about \$7 billion annually
- 90% of all site nights are in regional Australia
- 85% of the Australian population has stayed in a caravan holiday park at least once in their life
- There are 170,000 powered and unpowered sites available nightly in Australia. At an average occupancy rate of 54% this means 86,000 sites go unused nightly around the country
- Queensland had the highest percentage of registered campervans in 2013 at 23.8% of all registered campervans
- Queensland accounted for approximately 34% of the gross increase in registrations across Australia between 2012 and 2013
- The total number of registered RVs in Queensland reached 131,586 in 2013, up from 122,494 the previous year
- There were 528,869 RVs registered in 2013. Of these registered vehicles 474,783 are towed product (i.e. caravans, camper trailers, tent trailers, and other towed RVs) while 54,103 are motorised (i.e. motorhome or campervan)
- Caravan registrations increased 5.96% to January 2012 – the highest recorded against other motor vehicle types

Source: Caravan Industry Association of Australia



Mama Holiday

with **TRACEY SPICER**

The bumper sticker says it all: "Adventure before dementia." The grey nomads are leading a resurgence in caravanning.

Now, many are bringing their grandchildren as well.

Over the past two years, there has been a bigger increase in caravan registrations than any other vehicle type, according to the Caravan Industry Association of Australia.

The number of registered RVs – including caravans, camper trailers and motorhomes – has jumped 5 per cent, year on year, to almost 530,000 in 2013.

"Gramping is a phenomenon we're seeing a lot of recently," association chairman Mark Lindsay says.

Kay Wright, a grandparent from Bossley Park, is one happy gramper.

"It's so hard to keep kids amused

these days, but gramping really gave us the chance to be active together and connect one on one with our grandchildren," she says.

"We hope to continue this family tradition with our grandchildren for years to come."

During an RV trip with Elite Special Event Tours through the US, we met some delightfully eccentric characters.

"Me and Marty have got little Bob and Missy with us on the school break, while their mum and dad work," Chelsea Montgomery explains, as she expertly hooks up her nine-metre RV at a park

near Idaho's Potato Museum. "Ain't nothin' better than the great outdoors!" she enthuses.

Then I spot the number plate: "Powered by Smith 'n' Wesson".

Yep, only in America.

Back in Australia, the RV parks are finally becoming as user-friendly as they are in the US.

"Tiny seats and airline food can't compare to stretching out on the wide open road and stopping wherever and whenever you want," Apollo Motorhome Holidays chief executive Luke Trouchet says.

"Most guests now average between 10 to 18 days of travel and many of them are repeat travellers," he says.

Apollo has partnered with Big4 Holiday Parks, Top Tourist Parks and Family Parks to offer discounted rates.

But what if you've been spooked by caravanning ghosts of the past?

I have not-so-fond (more like death-defying) memories of careening at 100km/h down a mountain after dad lost the brakes while towing our '70s "bubble" van.

"Oh, and don't drive it on a windy day," inveterate traveller, John Hopkins, from Sydney, suggests.

"It's like driving a 40-foot fish by holding onto its fins!"

Then there's the ubiquitous wee bucket which, when my sister and I

came of age, we had the privilege of emptying.

It took 20 years to get me into an RV again. It turned out to be the best family trip we ever had. (Just make sure you ban the words, "Are we there yet?"). On threat of death.)

It's cheap, comfortable, and flexible. The new motorhomes have Bluetooth and iPod connectivity, so you don't have to worry about scratchy radio signals in remote areas.

See apollocamper.com/travel_routes for itineraries, including a foodies' tour of Tasmania and an east coast adventure in tropical Queensland.

And another good side to gramping?

You can blow the kids' inheritance before they do. **T**

'Gramping really gave us the chance to be active together and connect one on one with our grandchildren.'



TRAVELLER

KEEP UP WITH MAMA HOLIDAY

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ONE APPLE FITS ALL

Compromise is surely the key to family travel. Mix up your New York dreams (baseball, shopping, that cafe in *Friends*) with those of your kids (roller-coasters, ice-cream, patting a pygmy goat), with a little help from the locals. NYC Tourism has adopted cheeky book star Curious George as its new ambassador, and has built a series of kid-friendly itineraries that will keep your little monkeys enthralled as you all bite the Big Apple. nycgo.com/family.



Cabin fever: Modern RVs have revolutionised the retro family holiday experience.



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Free RV waste disposal

VICTOR HARBOR - The City of Victor Harbor has partnered with the Victor Harbor Holiday and Cabin Park to provide RV (recreational vehicle) users a free effluent disposal facility.

Users are requested to fill in a short survey to assist council in measuring the efficiency of the trial.

Director of planning and regulatory services at City of Victor Harbor, Graham Pathuis, said the RV and caravan effluent disposal point trial began in July 2014. He said the take up of this service has been slow to date.

“This is expected considering we are out of our peak tourist season,” he said.

“Council has been working with RV and caravan associations to notify potential users that this free service is available and is working on other ways to promote it.

“The feedback we have received from the RV and caravan community so far has been positive.

“Generally people are happy that this service is now available in Victor Harbor.”

Council allocated \$4000 to undertake the 12-month trial and it will provide the opportunity to find out the actual demand for a service of this type.

“Those who use the free service are also required to complete a survey which asks for the user’s postcode, number of people travelling with them, how long they will be staying in Victor Harbor and what they believe to be a reasonable fee for use of this facility,” Mr Pathuis said.

“Gathering this information will allow council to make an informed decision before engaging in a long term arrangement with the caravan parks, committing to a site to construct a council owned facility or abandoning the project.”

The trial is due to end on June 30, 2015.



EDITORIAL

WATTLE Range Council was caught between the proverbial devil and the deep blue sea when it came to frame a new free camping policy for motorhomes, self-contained vehicles and caravans.

A policy was required because of the growing trend of holidaymakers to camp for free while current ad hoc arrangements existing in the Wattle Range Council area were unsatisfactory.

Council's decision to create four "official free camping" sites at Nangula, Kalangadoo, Penola and Tantanoola will bring a mixed reaction from the business sector.

Generally speaking, owners of businesses such as cafés and petrol stations may welcome the additional trade that could come their way.

If council had opted to put a ban on motorhomes and the like, there was a risk this sector of the tourist market may have bypassed the area.

On the other hand, it is likely that patronage levels will drop at the caravan parks across Wattle Range.

Any drop in turnover would rightly be resented by the caravan park operators.

They have also pointed to the additional cost to ratepayers which will come from the upkeep and cleaning of the four free camping designated areas.

To be fair to all, council must rigorously enforce its new policy about free camping and ensure participants adhere to the two night maximum stays and leave the areas in a tidy state.

Furthermore, council must insist that only motorhomes and self-contained vehicles and caravans stay in these places.

Council should also place signs and police areas where camping is already prohibited such as at Rotary Park and the Millicent Swimming Lake.

These measures will also come at a cost in terms of resources and staff time, but are essential.



Free camps approved

Park operators disappointed over motorhome site allocation



**J.L. "FRED"
SMITH**

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THE overnight stopping of motorhomes have been banned in the parking bay along the Millicent Visitor

Information Centre.

But although Wattle Range Council has vetoed the area, it has voted in favour of allowing free camping by self-contained vehicles at Nangula, Tantanoola, Kalangadoo and Penola.

At its meeting on Tuesday night, council decided to allow free camping for a maximum of two nights at the four locations.

Earlier this year, a staff report suggested for free camping to be regulated and allowed at the five sites.

The matter went to public consultation and councillors considered 40 pages of submissions and background material before spending half an hour in debate.

As part of the free camping policy, signs will be erected by council at the

four locations clarifying the types of motorhomes and self-contained vehicles allowed.

Council will also place signs to promote the nearest caravan parks.

Councillor John Drew succeeded in his bid to have donation boxes placed at the four free camping locations.

Continued page 2



DISAPPOINTED: Millicent Hillview Caravan Park proprietor Allan Withers regrets the Wattle Range Council decision to allow free camping for motorhomes in four areas. Picture: RAQUEL MUSTILLO

Free campsites approved for Wattle Range

From front page

Mayor Peter Gandolfi said the Millicent Visitor Information Centre proposal was deleted as the site was in a prime location, limited in size and it would disadvantage the two local caravan parks.

"The designated areas for overnight stays have been placed outside the towns which have caravan parks," Mr Gandolfi said.

"Council has created these areas because we do not want to miss out on the tourist traffic."

He said people with motorhomes will use the petrol stations and cafes.

"In essence, current legislation already allows 'free camping' as people are allowed to pull over their vehicles for 24 hours as long as they are not being a traffic hazard or breaching any time regulations.

"Council wants to promote overnight stays and put some governance in place rather than the 'ad hoc' arrangements at present."

Much of the debate centred on the provision of free camping at Penola and motions submitted

by Riddoch Ward councillor Dean Burrow.

Millicent Hillview Caravan Park proprietor Allan Withers has been a vocal opponent to free camping for motorhomes and self-contained vehicles.

"I am very disappointed with the council decision and especially the free camping area in the rest-stop just out of Millicent on the Princes Highway," Mr Withers said.

"In the end, there is no such thing as a free holiday.

"Someone has to pay for it and, in this case, it will be the ratepayers of Wattle Range Council.

"They will have to pay for the upkeep and cleaning of the sites.

"Council should also be erecting signs at areas where camping is banned such as the Millicent swimming lake and outside the Millicent Visitor Information Centre".

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Council divided but freedom camping trial voted through

NICOLE CAIRNS

CAMPERVAN and motorhome owners will have a legal place to camp in Ballarat after council passed a motion to approve freedom camping at Pioneer Park.

The contentious matter was debated by councillors and members of the public, including holiday park operators and caravan users, on Wednesday.

Councillors voted five votes to four to move the recommendation. Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Ballarat representative Grant Tillett had been campaigning for the past two years for a place for campervans and

motorhomes to park and was glad to see the motion passed.

He was supported at the

council meeting by the CMCA general manager, Richard Barwick.

“What we’ve asked for won’t cost council a thing. We’re just asking for the key and the entry to a place where people can legally park their recreational

vehicles,” Mr Tillett said.

He said there was a need for one in Ballarat, as there wasn’t a place which allowed for recreational vehicles to park legally.

“Many of them won’t go to parks. It’s a very distinct group of travellers.”

The motion outlined strict operations for the park

operations, with which the CMCA would co-operate.

They includes a trial process to operate for one year which would be limited to one site,

no services would be available, there would be a maximum stay in location to be set (one or two nights) and that the trial can be cancelled if it is financially damaging other

parks or misuse of the park by campers.

Councillors who voted for the recommendation were Glen Crompton, Des Hudson, Peter Innes, Samantha McIntosh and John Philips, leaving councillors Belinda Coates, Vicki Coltman, Amy Johnson and Josh Morris against the recommendation.



Armidale business eyes opportunities

WITH figures showing visitors to caravan and holiday parks had increased by more than 14 per cent last year, two Armidale businesses have shown they're well placed to take advantage of the tourism boom.

The Caravan and Camping Industry Association of NSW held its annual gala dinner on Wednesday night where the Armidale Tourist Park was recognised for offering a broad range of high quality features that meet the needs of visitors, from backpackers and dog lovers, to families and long-distance travellers.

The local Uniplan Group, a business producing manufactured homes, took out the Best NSW Manufactured Home Business award for its high quality product.

"Both of these Armi-

dale businesses make significant contributions to the local economy through employment, attracting tourism and building trade. These are valuable local businesses who deserve to be recognised for their outstanding contributions," association president Theo Whitmont said.

He said 20 of the best holiday and residential parks and caravan and camping businesses and individuals from across the state had been recognised at the awards, along with those in the growing manufactured housing segment.

Year on year, caravan and holiday parks were attracting more visitors to the state with a 14 per cent increase in caravan and camping visitors last calendar year alone, Mr Whitmont said.



Free stop service is a winner

Michelle Gately

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ON A long journey back to Victoria, Malcolm Fletcher welcomed a free overnight stop in Rockhampton.

After only parking in Kershaw Gardens for the afternoon on their way to Townsville, Malcolm said he was pleasantly surprised to find he could park overnight on their way home.

Malcolm and his wife Veronica are just two of the travellers who have taken advantage of the opportunity to stay at the gardens after Rockhampton Regional Council's decision to allow free overnight stopovers last month.

But the council's decision came under fire from people

concerned about how the move would affect local caravan park operators.

Although they didn't pay to park in Kershaw Gardens

overnight, Malcolm said they did spend money refuelling their motorhome at a Rockhampton service station and in several stores at Stockland Rockhampton.

Another person camping in the park, who didn't want to be identified, was also pleased to be able to stay in Kershaw Gardens instead of a caravan park.

"(Caravan parks) have got all the bells and whistles that we don't need," he said.

"I can't see the point of going to a caravan park... for things we don't want."

He said he spent money at

local shops and service stations.

He believed making Kershaw Gardens RV friendly was a good move for Rockhampton.

He said during his travels he always stayed in RV friendly towns.

"I'll spend money at a town that wants us," he said.



NICE SPOT: Malcolm Fletcher is one of many to take advantage of free overnight parking in Rockhampton's Kershaw Gardens.

PHOTO: ALLAN REINIKKA ROK140814ACAMP1



CASH INJECTION

Travellers spend up big in towns

CAMPERVAN and motorhome travellers are injecting cash into regional towns and they're not looking for freebies, according to Colin Balfour.

The manager of government and stakeholder communications at the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia said towns needed to offer a mixture of accommodation options, including caravan parks and camping sites, to thrive.

But Mr Balfour said while RV travellers felt it was unfair to pay \$25 or more to park at a caravan park, they were willing to pay up to \$10 to dump at sites.

"These guys spend money, there's no doubt about that," he said.

Mr Balfour said his research into the industry found those travelling for more than three weeks spent \$500 to \$900 a week, adding up to between \$15,000 and \$20,000 over a trip.

"(Sites like Kershaw Gardens) do really help and it's outside school holidays so it just kicks everything along," Mr Balfour said.