



Questions raised over vans and RVs at Berri Club

FREE PARKING?

By
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BOTH Berri Barmera Council and the Berri Club say they want to work together to ensure recreational vehicle (RV) parking at the club meets planning regulations.

Vans and vehicles have been spotted parking on the vacant land adjacent to the club in recent months, prompting complaints from residents to council.

The club is advertised on the Wiki Camps smartphone application as an 'RV friendly destination'.

Council chief executive officer David Beaton said staff members had also noticed vehicles and campers at the site and that the Berri Club would need to seek development approval in order to advertise itself as an RV park.

"They need to submit a development application (and) that will need to be assessed by the Riverland Regional Development Assessment Panel (RRDAP) which will make the final decision," he said. "It's in a rural living zone, so it's not something that's necessarily automatically approved for that area like some other zones.

"(The development application process) gives people a chance to have their say, especially the neigh-

bours. People living in houses there have an expectation about what will be happening around them so it gives them a chance to say whether they support something like that or not."

Berri Club board member Alan Ranford said the club had received correspondence from council on the issue and planned to meet with staff or councillors to seek clarification.

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RV site: will it stay or will it go?

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"We don't want to fight with council or anything like that," he said.

"We'll speak to them and find out more about it and make sure it's all correct."

Mr Ranford said the club was still "struggling" since it was re-launched in August 2013 after going into administration in April that year, and was trying to diversify what it could offer the community.

"We're just trying to do something good for the town too," he said.

"We're not trying to become the caravan park or offer any facilities or anything.

"They can just park here for up to three days and have a meal and a drink and explore the town.

"We've spoken to people who say they wouldn't stop otherwise if it wasn't free."

Currently, council offers the Martin Bend camping area in Berri or the Bruce Oval RV Park – in conjunction with the Lions Club – at Barmera for \$5 per night.

Mr Beaton said the Berri Club would need to refrain from advertising the site or allowing it to be used as an RV park until approval was granted.



Travellers with campervans and RVs have been staying on land behind the Berri Club in recent weeks, but Berri Barmera Council says the club will need development approval to continue to offer the land.



FREE IS KEY

AN Adelaide visitor says he decided to park his caravan at the Berri Club because it was "free and spacious".

Graeme Walsh, along with his wife, has been staying at the club for the past few weeks, after seeing an advertisement for free recreational vehicle (RV) parking at the Berri Club online.

"There were too many trees at Martin Bend, especially with the size of my van," he said.

"I liked the area – everyone is nice and friendly and we've got a few things here like doctors appointments.

"They do great meals at the club, so we've been spending our money here."

Mr Walsh said the free recreational vehicle (RV) parking encouraged tourists to visit the town and spend their money at local businesses.

"Last week there were quite a few people here and it's got to be good for the town," he said.

"There's nowhere else (in Berri) for free camping, unlike Waikerie and other towns where there are places where it's free."



Camping costs

In response to C. Espitlier's letter

I must say all campers pay in some way if not directly to an overpriced caravan park.

While travelling last year we could have camped all around mainland Australia at so-called free campers but as is our choice we chose to do 50 per cent freedom camping and 50 per cent reasonable priced parks. It now costs about \$2000 return to take your van and vehicle on the ferry to and from Tasmania and this cost has to be absorbed by the traveller just to travel a few hundred kilometres. All travellers spend money whether it be fuel, groceries, meals, admittance fees to tourist attractions, repairs and replacement to vehicles, electrical goods etc.

Freedom camping is encouraged on the mainland and we have had communities thank us for visiting them and even had one councillor say vandalism has decreased since opening their towns to our freedom camping.

DIANE BROOKS
Ulverstone



Gypsy camps in Surfers to greet a grandchild

MACKENZIE RAVN

GYPSY by name, gypsy by nature.

But this nomadic Australian is happy putting her travelling lifestyle on hold for a bit while awaiting the birth of her daughter's third child.

Gypsy Love arrived on the Gold Coast this week in her wooden weatherboard van, the Kushti Bok 2, which means good luck in the gypsy language of Romany, to stay

with her heavily pregnant daughter Lisa Whitelock in Surfers Paradise.

The modified campervan is the second of its kind for

Gypsy, who also has a 1974 model Kombi fitted out like a gypsy wagon.

Gypsy spends her days travelling around Australia in her home speaking with the many curious people who stop to look at the unusual vehicle.

The campervan also dou-

bles as a mobile stall at festivals and markets where Gypsy sells trinkets and performs readings and massages.



Gypsy Love with her daughter Lisa Whitelock and the camper van Kushti Bok 2 at Main Beach.

Picture: JERAD WILLIAMS



The caravan company that's staying on a roll



NIGEL AUSTIN
SILENT ACHIEVER

THE growing desire of Australians to see more of the country has helped the Australian Caravan Company enjoy a rising tide of prosperity over the past 25 years.

The business started in 1978 but the real catalyst for its success came in 1990 when its then owners Wayne and Kaye Rohde met Jayco owner Gerry Ryan, leading to the start of a strong business relationship.

The Australian Caravan Co was appointed as the sole South Australian distributor for Jayco, a large Victorian caravan manufacturer.

Since then it has grown to become one of the six largest Jayco dealers in Australia and New Zealand, employing 38 people and selling more than 700 specialty recreation vehicles for an annual revenue of at least \$26 million.

The business is run today by general manager Matt Slee, his wife and account manager Michelle, and her sister and operations manager Leanne Dercho, both daughters of Wayne and Kaye Rohde, who retired in the mid-2000s.

"We are proud to be considered the industry leader in SA, employing 38 people and we have further growth aspirations," Mr Slee said.

"Our growth is up by 4.8 per cent so far this financial year which is encouraging."

Mr Slee said the business was enjoying a solid growth spurt because Australians find caravanning an affordable way to see the wide range of great attractions around the country, spending an estimated \$7 billion in regional areas each year.

The Rohde family bought the then small Australian Caravan Company in 1985 when it was aligned to another caravan manufacturer.

The new alignment with Jayco provided the spark for the rapid growth of the Australian Caravan Company, in line with Jayco's overall growth and national market share dominance, which has reached 46 per cent today. The business moved to its current

site at 820 South Rd, Edwardstown, in 2001, providing an ideal home for its huge range of Jayco campers, pop tops, caravans, motorhomes and fifth wheelers. The company also relocated and expanded its service department to a larger site at 108 Daws Rd, Melrose Park, in January 2011.

At the same time, it significantly developed its retail accessories focus and built a large showroom under the AllRV Parts & Accessories brand at Melrose Park.

"We regard customer service as paramount to the success of the business," Mr Slee

said. "Training is also critical, while we invest heavily in technology to keep us at the leading edge of the industry."

He added: "We work on the philosophy of people, process and product – because if you get those right, you should succeed." The employment of good people is a key characteristic of the business, which has a number of long-term employees.

Mr Slee is vice-president of the Caravan and Camping Industry Association of SA and executive director of the Caravan Industry Association of Australia (national), representing the interests of caravanning and allied industries.

The Australian Caravan Co has also become the key South Australian distributor for Braaap motorbikes, which are available through their accessories store All RV.

ON THE ROAD

■ **OWNER:** Wayne Rohde

■ **EMPLOYEES:** 38 people

■ **KEYS TO SUCCESS:**

1. Business plan.
2. Communication – to all stakeholders including customers, employees and suppliers.
3. Recruiting is important, to have good people working in the business.
4. Systems and process – trying to empower people.
5. Customer service.
6. Jayco products.



HITCH YOUR WAGON: Matt and Michelle Slee (top) with Leanne Dercho. Picture: KERYN STEVENS