



New home for RV campers

RECREATIONAL vehicle (RV) campers will be able to take some time out in Murwillumbah, after Tweed Shire Council recently approved the development application for an RV-friendly campsite at the town's showgrounds.

The "primitive camping ground" will be able to accommodate about 26 RVs.

The council's general manager, Troy Green, said they would continue to work with Destination Tweed, the community and "relevant industry groups" to establish another RV camping location.

"Tweed Shire Council is very supportive of finding suitable alternative sites to seek to tap into the freedom camping market," Mr Green said.

"The showground's close proximity to town means local businesses are also likely to benefit."

The council recently banned camping in Bruce Chick Park on Tweed Valley Way because it "threatened the environmental and heritage objectives of the park".

Tweed River Agricultural Society secretary Cynthia Hanger said the showground campsite would be a valuable asset for the Murwillumbah region.



Showground solution settles free camping question

TWEED SHIRE Council have moved to address the issue of providing free camping within the shire by approving the practice at the Murwillumbah Showgrounds.

At their Planning Committee meeting last week Council approved an application by the Murwillumbah Showground Trust for up to 26 'primitive' campsites at the showground, just two weeks after banning the practice at Bruce Chick Park.

Council General Manager Troy Green said Council would also continue to work closely with Destination Tweed, the community and relevant industry groups to establish another RV-suitable camping location in the short term.

"Tweed Shire Council is very supportive of finding suitable alternative sites to seek

to tap into the freedom camping market," said Mr Green.

"Council has been consulting with local industry groups, the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia and community associations to get their feedback and input into suitable alternative sites, with an emphasis on finding sites in Tweed hinterland villages such as Burringbar, Uki and Tyalgum."

Mr Green said the recently adopted new management plan for Bruce Chick Park did not allow overnight camping because it threatened the environmental and heritage objectives of the park.

"The new management plan follows extensive community consultation and investigation of the site conditions, environmental constraints and heritage of the area, including its original intended

purpose as envisaged by Brice Chick," said Mr Green.

"While Council was very keen to explore the potential of establishing an RV-friendly primitive camping facility at this site, it became evident through site investigations that such a use would unreasonably conflict with the environmental values of the site.

"RV camping at the site would also require significant management, sewerage services and other facilities which would bring a considerable ongoing cost to ratepayers.

"The showground's close proximity to town means local businesses are also likely to benefit."

One local who has been campaigning to retain free RV camping, Neville Jennings, said he was pleased with the decision to open the showground to campers, but

disagreed with the decision to close Bruce Chick Park.

"It remains my view, that Bruce Chick Park should have its existing facilities upgraded and accessible for overnight campers," said Mr Jennings.

"It is hard to see how it will help the environment if visitors are denied access to toilet facilities.

"Council's action in opening up the Showground for travellers is very welcome, as the site is close to the CBD and Museum but there is still an issue for drivers of recreation vehicles wishing to visit the Tweed Regional Gallery and Tourist Information Centre.

"I look forward to the day when the Shire can truly say it is RV friendly."



Friendly destinations ahead

The towns of Parilla, Pinnaroo and Lameroo could soon become RV-friendly destinations, with the Southern Mallee District Council set to apply for all three to be classified.

It follows Geranium's approval as RV friendly.

The acting chief executive officer of the council Neville Gasmier said the council considered applying for both RV-friendly destination and a RV-friendly town but chose the former alternative.

He said to become a RV friendly destination the essential criteria was to have:

- Enough room for large vehicles to manoeuvre.
- Parking on a level, solid surface.
- Provision of short term, low cost, overnight parking (24/48 hours) – for RV vehicles.

Mr Gasmier said to become a RV-friendly town would have been more onerous and required:

- Access to potable water.
- Access to a free dump point.
- Provision of short term, low cost,



Parilla, Pinnaroo and Lameroo could soon become RV-friendly destinations.

overnight parking (24/48 hours) for RV vehicles close to the CBD.

- Provision of appropriate parking within the CBD with access to a general shopping area for groceries and fresh produce.

He said while the benefits of being a RV-friendly destination might not be necessarily immediate it would form an important cog in the council's tourism plans.

"The benefits for the region include that it builds a vital component of the tourism strategy that council will undertake to build and implement," Mr Gasmier said.

"It fits into the infrastructure that is required to ensure economic growth through tourism.

"Infrastructure forms an important cog in the wheel as well as attractions in the region and the marketing makes up the third and final component of the strategy.

"Council needs to build this strategy on the back of its strategic plan to be developed before December this year.

"Once we have the plans in place then council just needs to be effective in implementing the actions of both the strategic plan and the tourism strategy to ensure its success."



Caravan travellers set to stop in town

■ Sophie Clapin

Motorhomes travelling from across the country will screech to a halt in Wagin next week for the eagerly anticipated 2015 Solos Rally.

The rally is set to attract more than 150 motorhomes to town, who will take part in a range of activities including day tours, parades and entertainment from October 12-19.

The Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia conducts rallies around Australia twice a year and with about 65,000 members, rally manager Glenyce Mills said there was a true sense of camaraderie among the group.

"It is an opportunity to catch up with the same group of friends that you hadn't seen for months," she said.

"It is also a chance to showcase the region, with many visiting the wildflowers, and we will conduct day tours out to Dumbleyung, the Stirlings, Narrogin and even Bridgetown."

Shire of Wagin chief executive Peter Webster said the town was prepared for the arrival of the motorhomes, with many of the forward party already in town.

"Although we are expecting nearly 180, they have been talking and planning with us for over a year, and have done the rally in Wagin before," he said.

"They will definitely enjoy themselves — they have a lot of activities to do, and we are fortunate that we have a lot of facilities they can make use of."

After Wagin, the group will make their way down to the CMCA's 30th national rally in Albany on October 26.



Long vehicles

PUBLIC comment is being called for about the installation of long vehicle parking bays in the Denmark central business district.

It is proposed that three normal parking bays in North Street opposite the fire station be set aside for two-hour parking as long vehicle bays.

An area already used for recreational vehicle parking in Annie Harrison Park is also under consideration as is four-hour parking at the basketball courts in Berridge Park, which is also used for RV parking.

The corner of Walker Street and Hollings Road, on the eastern side of Hollings Road, is to be considered for two-hour parking and the Denmark Visitor Centre where four-hour parking is already in place.

After a 30-day comment period the matter will be referred back to the council and any changes will require an amendment to the parking by-laws.



RV-FRIENDLY PUSH



DENIS PETERS

COUNCILLOR and advocate of promoting Hamilton as an RV-friendly town, Albert Calvano, is again planning to put a motion before Southern Grampians Shire Council calling for its active support and

for community input on a dedicated stop-over location.

Cr Calvano said he believed there were economic benefits available to Hamilton's businesses by encouraging recreational vehicle travellers into the city, at minimal cost and with the further benefit of promoting Hamilton far afield.

He endorsed comments by other advocates, Tiger Wettenhall, Max Keen and Earl Membrey, who urged action on the issue by council in a Spectator article ("RV dollars go begging", October 2).

"I am looking forward in the near future to put a motion to council for Hamilton to become "RV Friendly," Cr Calvano said in a letter to The Spectator.

"We without doubt meet the criteria that the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) is looking for, such as parking within the town centre, with access to a general shopping area, provisions of a short-term (24/48 hour) parking for self-contained vehicles, access to potable water and an installation of a free dump point.

"I'm hoping that the motion will be fully backed and supported by the elected councillors of the Southern Grampians Shire."

Cr Calvano said opportunities existed for the city through tapping into the RV market, often referred to as the Grey Nomads.

"Local governments who stand still with little vivid imagination or will power, will miss out on

what other communities are gaining," he said.

"I strongly believe Hamilton is the ideal location to provide tourists with additional options to ensure they enjoy our landmarks.

"By having an RV friendly stop-over, we can build, market and promote Greater Hamilton through the CMCA.

"In terms of costs to set up this proposal, it is surprisingly economic and efficiently cheap, to get off the ground. If needed, there are external funding programs available for the council to consider exploring. This greatly brings about a lot of benefits and positive outcomes to the community.

"I'm led to believe that the CMCA promotes RV Friendly towns by dedicating one page to the town on the club's website, publishing a "one-off" article on the town in its monthly magazine, The Wanderer", and listing the town in each edition of the magazine. This would be a huge plus for promoting our shire."

"In terms where are we going to locate the RV-friendly stop, will be open for community input and discussion."

Cr Calvano also called for a review of the location of the Visitors' Information Centre, currently located just outside the CBD in Lonsdale St.