



CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Grey nomads pour in

A RECORD number of grey nomads from across the country are expected to roll into Mareeba for the town's 19th annual Christmas in July celebrations this weekend.

The four-day event (July 28-31) held at Davies Park is hosted by the Far North Nomads Chapter of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia and is a significant event on the region's calendar.

Far North Nomads Chapter president Len Hine expected the number of CMCA members



attending this year's rally to surpass last year's crowd, which was more than 300 individual units.

"We're going to have a really big one we reckon," he said.

Mr Hine said events will run throughout the weekend including a talk from the Transport Department, a pet show and Christmas dinner catered by the Mareeba Leagues Club on Saturday and an open day for the public on Sunday, running from 9am to 4pm.

Entry to the open day on Sunday is by a gold coin donation.



Outback town puts out the welcome mat for RV travellers

HAPPY TO HAVE YOU

EVAN MORGAN

THE outback town of Julia Creek, 660km west of Townsville, is fast becoming a mecca for motorhome travellers wanting to become part of the local community.

The town offers travellers free camping for four days next to the picturesque Julia Creek and a unique opportunity to bond with residents.

A total of 542 camping permits were issued in June for the Julia Creek Friendly RV site on the eastern side of town compared with 374 for the same month last year, a 45 per cent increase.

And overall the site has seen a 35 per cent increase in visitors in the past financial year.

McKinlay Shire tourism co-ordinator Georgia Fleming said travellers appreciated being made to feel welcome.

"For four days they can chill out, throw in a line or a yabby pot, there are free push bikes at the site to ride to town to buy groceries and they can explore the shire and have a good time," she said.

Ms Fleming said there were weekly bush dinners at the Julia Creek Caravan Park

where visitors and locals got together around a camp fire.

"Visitors can experience how the locals live, be it the local post woman, truck driver or helicopter pilot, grazier, housewife, or a mother who home schools her children. The guests get to share their

lives and experiences." She said the shire also ran an RV Camp Host program from April through to September

where people could stay at the site for up to three weeks in exchange for issuing camp permits and making sure the site ran smoothly.

"We develop a roster six months in advance which is always very popular and we have a lot of repeat hosts that call Julia Creek their second home," Ms Fleming said.

For current camp hosts Ken and Colette Gordon, it is their first time in North

Queensland. They have travelled from Bellbird, a small town in the Hunter Valley in NSW.

"We saw an ad on Facebook 12 months ago and applied. We have been looking forward to it for quite some time," Mr Gordon said.

He said the Julia Creek RV site was unique, and what the McKinlay Shire had done was a role model for other towns.

"This town has done its homework. I am sure we will come back and experience things as tourists rather than camp hosts," he said.

“ There are weekly bush dinners ... where visitors and locals get together around a camp fire

GEORGIA FLEMING



Camp hosts Colette and Ken Gordon.





Consider RV benefits

Dear sir,

The article titled 'Shire explores free camping' published in the Camperdown Chronicle on July 15 addressed caravan parks /commercial RV tourism but in no way mentioned the positive side of offering low cost non-commercial tourism in the shire.

As stated in the article, RV tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in Australia and can deliver significant economic benefit to towns in the Corangamite Shire. A very high proportion of new caravans and motorhomes are now self-contained, being fitted with shower, toilet and solar panels. These RVs no longer require all the services offered by a caravan park.

The basic accommodation product required for self-contained RV tourists is a dump point, potable and non-potable water and a place to park. RV tourists do not expect this to be

offered free of charge and are prepared to pay up to \$10 a night.

The national association referred to in the article is the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA).

CMCA is a not for profit organisation and currently has over 66,000 members involved in RV tourism. The club is dedicated to improving RV tourism. Indirectly CMCA also represents the interests of all RV owners across Australia.

The CMCA in no way actively advocates free camping or directs its members to by-pass towns.

CMCA works directly with local government in developing RV Friendly Towns in regions all over Australia. An RVFT has all the basic facilities for self-contained RV tourism. There are currently 282 RVFTs across Australia and over 33 per cent of shires are successfully participating in the RVFT scheme. Many RVFT towns have caravan parks.

As part of the overall non-commercial RV tourism package, CMCA also sponsors the installation of public dump points.

In smaller towns with insufficient infrastructure, RV Friendly Destinations are created. There are currently 125 RVFDs across Australia.

Through the CMCA Dollar Wise Park

network, CMCA also works directly with caravan parks. Through the scheme, progressive caravan parks are offering a low cost, no frills accommodation to self-contained

RV tourists for \$10 per night. There are now almost 50 Dollar Wise caravan parks.

Caravan parks are an important key element in the overall tourism package that Corangamite Shire has to offer the RV tourist. RV tourists simply want the freedom to choose from different quality venues.

Research shows, of the total RV tourists, 30 per cent stay exclusively at caravan parks. (Mainly families, RVs not self-contained), 16 per cent stay only at non-commercial accommodation. (RVs too large for caravan parks, tourists who enjoy freedom, mainly "grey nomads") and 54 per cent enjoy a mix of both commercial and non-commercial accommodation. On any one night, caravan parks satisfy around 50 per cent of RV travellers' requirements.

By offering both commercial and limited non-commercial low cost RV accommodation Corangamite Shire is:

- Satisfying the accommodation demand for all RV tourists;
- Sending a message that Corangamite Shire welcomes all RV tourists no matter where they choose to stay, in caravan parks or low cost self-contained sites;
- All businesses in the shire will share in the tourist dollar spend, not just the caravan parks; and
- Even the 16 per cent of RV tourists who never use caravan parks, will be visiting.

Rex Breen CMCA

State Representative Victoria



More opportunities to open RV parks made possible by council

FARMERS across the region could be opening their gates to RVs and self-contained caravans and campers under changes to the Fraser Coast Planning Scheme.

Amendments to the scheme adopted at the Fraser Coast Regional Council meeting on Wednesday include expanding the opportunity for RV grounds and allowing RV grounds to be set up in an existing tourist park.

The amendments expand the opportunities for Nature-based Tourism and RV grounds in land around the Fraser Coast classed as limited

development, environmental management and conservation, open space, community facilities and rural zoned land.

The council said that the amendments meant existing parks would be able to convert sites for RVs without the need for infrastructure charges or application fees.

Providing low cost options will increase the range of facilities and camping options available, provide more opportunities for landowners to develop facilities and attract RVs to the region.



Forces join for RV gains

Hayden Johnson

Hayden.Johnson@apn.com.au

TWO southern Fraser Coast chambers of commerce have collaborated to lobby the council to allow free parking in Maryborough for self-contained RVs.

Maryborough Chamber of Commerce president Lance Stone and Tiaro chamber president Darryl Stewart made the partnership announcement this week.

The chambers will lobby the council for more RV parking spaces in the Alan and June Brown car park and at the Maryborough Airport.

Mr Stone said for a minimal cost the council could quickly stimulate the economy of Maryborough and the Fraser Coast.

He said the move to make the region more hospitable to RVs would create more

jobs in light industry and revitalise the retail and

hospitality sectors.

“We need to move quickly to make these parking areas available, win RV Friendly status and declare that

Maryborough will become the RV capital of Australia,” Mr Stone said.

“Bundaberg is creating an RV superpark: councillors need to act now or we miss out again.”

Calling on the council to amend its heavily criticised Fraser Coast Camping Strategies Options, Mr Stone said the amendment needed to cover only Maryborough.

“More than \$3 billion dollars a year is now spent

in Queensland by the RV community,” he said.

“These people represent the wealthiest sector of our population with the highest

disposable incomes.”

Tourism councillor Stuart Taylor said “any request made by a body like the chamber of commerce is always considered”.

“I’m happy to discuss it but it’s important we have some consistency,” Cr Taylor said.

“M’boro will become the RV capital of Australia.”

— Lance Stone



New RV camping site to be trialled

Janessa Ekert

CASSOWARY Coast Council will trial a new recreational vehicle site in Innisfail.

Mayor John Kremastos said it was to try and attract as many visitors to the region as possible.

"We know it's been missing," he said.

The council unanimously voted on the trial site, which will be at the corner of Ernest and Park Sts near Brothers Leagues Club.

Mr Kremastos said it was only a small site and the trial, which should kick off in the next two weeks, was to "gauge the take up by the travellers".

"We're certainly not trying to encroach on or disadvantage caravan park operators," he said.

"There are a lot of RVs going through town and they don't have an appetite for staying at caravan parks."

Mr Kremastos said they were trying to capture the market that was moving on.

"This is to work in conjunction with them (caravan park

operators) and get more people to look at this region, its beauty and stay an extra day," he said.

Wet weather had held up finalising the site but work should start soon.

"The ground still has to be laid out and marked," Mr Kremastos said.

An RV site at Tully Showgrounds is seen as a model.

"And that seems to be working well," he said, adding that there was no nearby caravan park in the Tully region.

Mr Kremastos said it wasn't free camping and there would be a \$15 overnight fee to use the site.

He said at this stage it was only a small site and the number of vehicles it would hold was still to be determined.

He believed it would cater to those towing a caravan as well as RV travellers.

The trial will run to the end of the tourist season.



John Kremastos