



The difficulty of RV-friendly towns

Being a caravan/campervan traveller for over 50 years, it was with great interest I read about the approach that had been made to the City of Greater Geraldton (CGG) to become an RV-friendly city (RVFC) by the Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA).

As a resident/ratepayer of the city I was not happy with the prospect of allowing 'free short-term stay camping' for recreational vehicles for up to three days at a time in the city's car-parks, as this appears to completely reverse current regulations — at present illegal campers are moved on or fined by the city's rangers.

After accessing the CGG's draft I became even more concerned as the proposal was assessed using CMCA and Tourism WA data, opinions and projections.

For the city to become accredited as a RVFC by the CMCA it has to meet certain specific essential criteria — three of which are free short-term parking for self-contained vehicles for 48-72 hours, free access to potable water, drinking, and free dump points for waste all within the town precinct.

CMCA data shows that their club members spend \$116 a day when on the road and their average stay nationally is three-and-a-half days.

They assert that if these criteria are met and the city becomes a RVFC then we could expect 50 per cent more than our current 163,000 per annum visitors.

These 81,500 extra visitors all spending \$116 a day will bring about a boost to the city's economy of \$9.5 million. Hypothetical economics at work here.

The CGG draft proposes, after a seemingly pointless three-month trial period, that free short-term stay parking — up to 72 hours — will then be permitted in public car-parks across the city.

Cape Burney, Mahomet's Beach, Surf Club, Separation Beach, Pages Beach, behind the Sail Inn Cafe, Batavia Marina, St. Georges Beach, opposite IGA Glenfield, Eadon-Clarke Oval and 440 Roadhouse.

Also, for the purposes of this draft the CGG classifies RV-vehicles as five-wheeler vans, motorhomes and self-sufficient caravans, all the way down to station wagons and backpacker vans — camper trailers and tents are not included.

Road travellers have three major overheads to meet — fuel, food and accommodation — and when travelling you have to budget and live within your means.

This proposal by CMCA is specifically about self-sufficient travellers not needing caravan parks, and by putting this proposal up they assert that if accepted the city's finances will be boosted by an increase in visitors.

This in essence is 'buying' visitors with no realistic reason to believe there will be any overall benefit to the city or ratepayers.

There are serious reservations about the proposal and the implications of its adoption, especially when Appendix D of the draft states that Tasmania does not have any RV-friendly towns now, as the private caravan park owners complained to the Economic Regulator that councils were providing free overnight camping services, which was in breach of Competitive Neutrality

Principles under the National Competition Policy.

These complaints were upheld.

Finally, if free overnight stays of up to three days are allowed by the CGG for all RV-vehicles in nominated city car-parks, then is it not reasonable to assume that some (even quite a few) of our current 163,000 caravan visitors will opt to use a free carpark rather than a caravan park.

This could put considerable pressure on car-parks across the city causing residents inconvenience, the CGG major problems and becoming a headache to police.

Name and address withheld at author's request.

■ We are currently in a 42-day public comment period regarding the City of Greater Geraldton's RV-friendly town draft proposal. What do you think? To have your say email us at editor@geraldtonguardian.com.au



The City of Greater Geraldton is considering becoming an RV-friendly city. Picture: WA News



A place to dump

Ever wondered what happens to all the “ones and twos” from a caravan loo?

It can be a caravaners nightmare trying to find an official “dump point” to dispose of the waste.

Now those choosing to stop in Benalla can do so with “relief” with the official opening of the Benalla dump point at Benalla Airport.

Benalla Rural City Council and the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia have worked together to bring the project to fruition.

The CMCA has more than 60 000 members with a large majority travelling all over Australia.

There are many thousands more in caravans.

The dump point encourages all of these people to visit Benalla to use the facility.



Benalla's new 'dump point': — Benalla Rural City Mayor Barbara Alexander with Bob Arthur of the Campervan and Motorhome Club who worked together on the project.



For RV drivers

• Infrastructure

The Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire would consider allocating \$55,000 in its mid-year budget review for six 24-hour recreational vehicle (RV) bays, providing space for visiting campers to the area.

The allocation would be subject to positive feedback from adjacent residents to the proposed site on Staff Street and Jarrahdale community association. Shire president Keith Ellis

said it was no secret that the shire lacked tourism accommodation but was keen to cater for a range of visitors over the coming years.

“The bays will potentially be nine by nine metres and located east of Staff Street with its forest location within walking distance to other features and facilities,” he said.

A recent report to the council noted that providing RV bays would introduce Jarrahdale to the marketplace as an RV destination and deliver tourism and economic benefits.



Council approves RV development; but not without fair opposition

Council has approved an application from Euston Bowling and Recreation Club for the parking of self-contained recreational vehicles (RV).

A condition of the approval is that camping be restricted to a maximum of 20 Recreational Vehicles and that the facility be advertised as self-contained camping only. The approval does not extend to providing amenities such as showers and toilets.

Approval did not come unopposed, with submissions received from both the Euston and Robinvale Caravan Parks, concerned the club was creating unfair competition through discounted parking fees.

"Competition is good, but it needs to be sustainable," Euston Riverfront Caravan Park operator, Mark Tyrrell said.

"If people know they can park at the club for \$5 they are going to by-pass us.

"There are only a handful of businesses in Euston, there is no need to jump on anyone's business.

"We need to stand together."

In a letter to Council, Robinvale Riverside Caravan Park lessees, Kaine and Kelly Millard said there were already three caravan parks within a 10 km radius of the club.

"Any caravan, motorhome or camper is classed as an RV – Recreational Vehicle," they wrote.

"Most sold on today's market are fully self contained. Don't be fooled that the club will only target that group, because that group is by far the large majority.

"I do understand their dilemma and have empathy for them but I believe it is not in Council's jurisdiction to tell a business what it can and cannot do," Cr Ken Barnes said.

Council's Director Infrastructure and Development, John Stevenson said the submission from Euston Caravan Park was accompanied by a petition of 150 signatures.

"I think the main concern is that this will start off as an RV park and escalate into a caravan park," Cr Jeff Mannix said.

"If a determination were to recommend refusal on the grounds of unfair competition alone, Council may well be exposed to an upheld appeal from the applicants," Mr Stevenson said.

Mayor, Cr Leigh Byron who is also a director of the club, declared an interest in the matter and left the room during discussion. He took no part in the decision-making process.



Caravan industry calls for single State body

More than 100 submissions to Government received



PETER POAT

ONE of the key points in the submission from the caravan industry to the Government's proposed changes to the Caravan and Camping Grounds Act was the role of local government authorities.

The industry believes there should be a single State body to oversee regulations as it feels local government authorities lack understanding of business parameters and imperatives of caravan parks, and are in control of a system which will result in inconsistencies.

However, in a submission from the WA Local Government Association it gave a "no comment" response to a direct question on the proposal, but the Association indicated its members are not disposed to surrender their regulatory role.

It claims the establishment of an independent body would likely increase a back-log of licence approvals and inspections and queries whether a full cost benefit analysis has been undertaken. It also questions the prospect of finding the people with relevant expertise to undertake this work.

One of the submission's major gripes was its member local government authorities being denied the opportunity for efficient cost recovery as charges are set by the State. This leads to

all ratepayers subsidising the choices of some ratepayers (read: caravan parks).

It contends government-set fees and penalties fail to keep up with inflation and are currently up to 62 per cent behind creeping inflation. It says a requirement to conduct mandatory inspections is an expense many local government authorities find difficult to recoup.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia believes there should be a common approach but sees difficulty in such a body being responsible for 400-500 licensees in WA.

It suggested local government should have the authority to issue licences, with oversight from a special unit within the State Government.

The CMCA also wants to maximise the availability of low-cost and no-cost camping grounds with minimal facilities to meet the needs of

self-contained recreational vehicle travellers.

It defines self-contained as RVs with an on-board toilet, shower, kitchen and the capacity to store fresh water, retain black and grey water, and store other refuse.

While supporting caravan parks with services at a level appropriate for travellers who don't own a self-contained RV, it

also seeks the opportunity to establish its own member-only camping grounds across WA.

The CMCA says RVs are not determined by vehicle type but by their overall capacity and believe the requirements of self-contained and non-self-contained units need to be clearly addressed. The accommodation needs of self-contained RVs are limited to a place to park, have access to a dump point and potable water.

It supports a separate licence category for nature-based parks, saying a management plan should be specific to the needs of RV travellers and allow for stays longer than three consecutive nights, in line with the self-containment capacity of the vehicle and the waste-management capacity of the site.

The CMCA also supports the opportunity for caravan parks to extend their facility by utilising areas of the park for self-contained vehicles without the necessity to provide all the services.

It considers the current caravan park model for meeting the needs of camping and RV travellers over the next two-to-three decades as very limited, suggesting the overall cost of establishing and maintaining parks could change significantly if they are tailored to specific traveller requirements and not on the basis of number of sites and toilets.

Roadside rest areas, sometimes

used for overnight camping, are also a contentious issue. However in Main Roads' submission it said, contrary to common belief, there were no provisions dealing with these areas for resting or sleeping.

It said it may be worthwhile having uniform local laws for their use and added it would like to be involved in discussions about appropriate ways to achieve any regulation.

The Government is currently analysing 113 submissions received from a cross section of interested parties and consumers. It is expected the new regulations will be released in December for a four-month public comment phase before a final draft is completed in August next year.

It said it may be worthwhile having uniform local laws.



With caravanning and touring so popular, the CMCA is calling for more low-cost camping grounds.