



TRAVEL

Caravan and camping travel growing in popularity

KATHERINE TWEED

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With caravan and camping accounting for 30 per cent of overall tourism growth in NSW, it comes as no surprise that more seniors are hooking up the van for a holiday.

“Caravan and camping is now experiencing significant growth - punching well above its weight and making it a major contributor to the NSW economy,” said Caravan and Camping Industry Association NSW CEO, Lyndel Gray.

“In the year to December 2013, close to 2.4 million people stayed in commercial caravan or camping accommodation in this state, delivering more than 11 million visitor nights. This is an additional 303,000 visitors to commercial caravan parks on the previous year, and an additional 727,000 visitor nights.”

The figures have come from a recent National Visitor Survey of Australia.

“Of the overall number of caravan and camping visitors to NSW, 80 per cent are engaged in holiday and leisure activities that bring significant benefits for the broader tourism economy of regions. These results prove that caravan and camping is fast becoming a preferred holiday option in NSW,” Ms Gray said.

Caravanners spend an average of around five nights in one place, which is more time than other travellers.

“Our Association has a year round program of activity to help drive growth in our sector. One of our major events is the annual NSW Caravan, Camping, RV and Holiday Supershow which will be held from 26 April - 4 May 2014 at Rosehill Racecourse,” Ms Gray said.

See www.supershow.com.au.



Caravanning is the holiday of choice for many seniors



Latest Wicked Campers slogan highlights need for action

THE Australian Christian Lobby is calling for the Queensland Government to urgently act in light of the latest advertising slogan from Wicked Campers and introduce outdoor advertising laws to keep the public space in line with community standards.

ACL's Queensland Director Wendy Francis said the latest slogan "fat girls are harder to kidnap" by the campervan company degrades women and condones violence against them.

"Members of the public have expressed concern at this slogan and whilst the

Advertising Standards Board (ASB) has upheld the complaint, Wicked Campers has been free to ignore correspondence from the ASB," she said.

"The self-regulation system isn't working and it's time for the Queensland Government to step in and enforce rulings and introduce penalties," she said.

"A Parliamentary report into outdoor advertising released in January recommended introducing a co-regulatory approach to advertising to prevent this type of behaviour from happening," she said.

The report's recommendations were unanimous and bi-partisan.

Ms Francis said she's concerned at the time it's taking for the government to introduce legislation since it and the Opposition agreed to the report's recommendations.

"The Attorney-General Jarrod Bleijie told parliament last week that the government would 'take our time' to implement the recommendations and work with billboard advertising owners," she said.

"It's time for the Queensland Government to respond to community expectations," she said.



Operators welcome policy tackling freedom camping

CHARLEVILLE

SOUTHWEST QLD tourism operators have praised the release of the state government's camping options package. The toolkit released by tourism minister Jann Stuckey gives local councils a platform to formalise their approaches to attract more drive tourists and manage so-called free campers.

The Qld drive tourism strategy 2013-15 is the result of 18 months of workshops and consultations around the state. In October last year 25 tourism operators and caravaners attended a session at Charleville racecourse hosted by tourism and environmental consultant Mark Olsen.

Murweh shire tourism officer Jane Morgan said the toolkit accurately reflected what was discussed at the workshop. "It absolutely does. I like that all the reports and studies that have been done have been brought all together. They refer to other countries and other states. When I saw it I went back to the boys who came out and said this is an amazing document. It was a monumental effort by all concerned to bring it all together."

The 78-page document states that half of visitors to western Qld stay in a combination of commercial and non-commercial accommodation. Only 16% stay in non-commercial sites and 34% stay in caravan parks.

It summarises the main issues as

managing future growth of self-contained vehicles, the issues associated with local government planning and development, the impact on the environment and public disturbance, and the management of commercial camping sites.

It details options to find a balance between commercial camping and the increased popularity of non-commercial camping.

Jane said the document formalised what was already out there and brought all the previous research together. "Put it this way, the thing is the market is doing it anyway. Market is all about supply and demand, and catering for that demand," she said. "But we've got to be careful not to upset the balance with local caravan parks because

that's their livelihood."

Jane said it was unfortunate the term free camping had ever been introduced to the market. "About 80 or 90% of people are happy to pay \$5 for camping along a riverbank. Fortunately for us, our caravan parks all offer something great. We have camp ovens and station tours."

Jane prefers the term freedom camping and said the idea had been floating around forever. For at least 20 years, people wanted to stay along a riverbank in the out-back but then spent time camping in town caravan parks to use amenities. "The toolkit is bringing together all of the stuff that's been floating around forever. There's never been a one-stop shop," she said.

Charleville bush caravan park manager Graham Reid recognised the need for low cost camping options to ensure tourists didn't boycott town in favour of free camping at the Ward and Warrego rivers. He is opening a bush camping ground for self-contained caravans.

'About 80 or 90% of people are happy to pay \$5 for camping along a riverbank.'



WOLLONDILLY SHIRE

Disposal points for travellers

➔ MOTORHOME enthusiasts will be given an incentive to stay and enjoy some good, old-fashioned Wollondilly shire hospitality with three recreational vehicle dump points being installed.

Wollondilly Council's Economic Development Advisory Group has formed a partnership with the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia in order to entice visitors to the shire and promote self-contained tourism.

The dump point stations will provide facilities for black and grey water disposal and

“We want self-contained travellers to stay in Wollondilly and see our beautiful scenery”
- **Benn Banasik**

discourage indiscriminate dumping and associated environmental problems.

“We want to give self-contained travellers the opportunity to stay in Wollondilly and see our beautiful scenery and experience our country hospitality,” Mayor Benn Banasik said.



Free camp concern

Park operators unite to enforce restrictions

AT LEAST five caravan park operators in the Wattle Range Council area are united in their opposition to a proposal they claim threatens their livelihoods.

The operators from Penola, Millicent, Southend and Beachport are against the council's intention to establish free camping.

In response to council's call for public comment, caravan park operator Gloria Withers said the free locations would cut their patronage and incur further costs for the council.

Together with her husband Allan, she has owned and operated Millicent's Hillview Caravan Park for the past 16 years.

"We are not opposed to such free parks as we have used them ourselves in the past in our own travels around Australia and intend to do so in our retirement years," Ms Withers said.

"We all believe such proclaimed free parks should be restricted to remote bush camps or located at least 20km away from a town or an established caravan park.

"The limit is recommended by the Caravan and Camping Association of South Australia.

"It is our view that Wattle Range Council will be up for additional costs as these so-called free parks will have to be supervised, cleaned and maintained and this expense would have to be borne by ratepayers."

She said fellow park operators in the council area regularly had problems with travellers who camp in Beachport, Millicent, Southend and Penola at no cost.

"A great number of the travellers don't have self-contained facilities in their vans and many attempt to use our park's showers and toilets," she said.

"There was a situation in the Penola caravan park where 20 travelling backpackers tried to

use the showers and the police had to be called.

"We anticipate these kind of problems would arise if the council set aside places for free parks.

"By managing the five caravan parks as well as we do and providing clean and comfortable facilities, we feel we are encouraging travellers to stay extra nights in this area and boost the local economy.

"This is why we have taken the unprecedented step of making a joint submission to council."

Wattle Range Mayor Peter Gandolfi said the council sought public comment on the designation of limited short-term vehicle-only camping areas in various locations across the council area.

Mr Gandolfi said more people were travelling with self-contained vehicles and currently there were no designated areas where they could camp.

"Visitors are currently stopping throughout Wattle Range during their stay and council is well aware that some are camping at inappropriate areas, including town parklands," Mr Gandolfi said.

"As a result, council aims to limit the camping to appropriate locations and regulating these stays through its by-laws."

He said refusing free camping altogether would encourage travellers to move to neighbouring council areas to camp, taking economic spin-offs with them.

"Some owners of self-contained motor homes and caravans choose not to stay in caravan parks," Mr Gandolfi said.

"To cater for these people, council established a by-law allowing short-term stays.

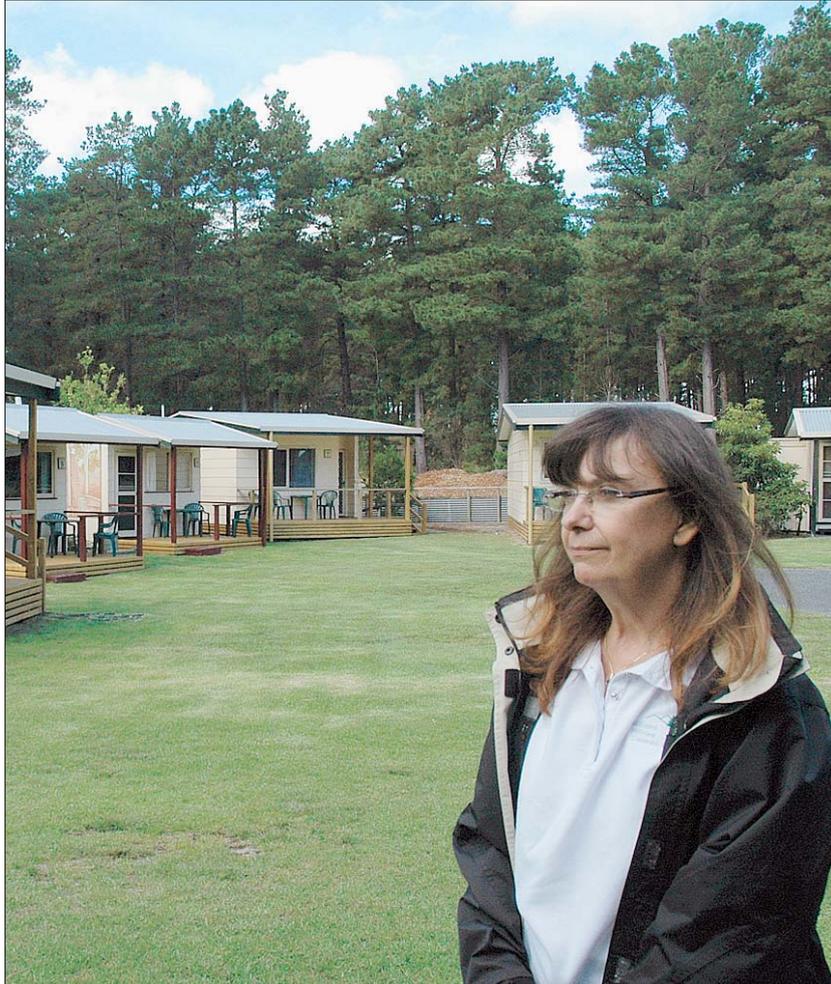
"And now we are in the process of identifying suitable areas where free camping can occur."

The locations at Penola, Millicent, Nangula, Tantanoola

and Kalangadoo will be for self-contained motor homes and caravans only, excluding the erection of tents.

Council is seeking feedback from the public - including caravan park and other business owners - on the proposed locations for recreational vehicle-free camping.

The closing date for submissions is April 30.



UNDER THREAT: Hillview Caravan Park proprietor Gloria Withers says a council proposal to establish free camping areas will threaten her business.

Picture: FRED SMITH



FREEBIE BACKLASH: A designated area at Greenrise Lake will be open to free camping for self-contained vehicles under a Wattle Range Council proposal.



SENIORS

PENRITH'S #1 GUIDE FOR OLDER RESIDENTS



Super day out

The caravan and camping world is about to descend on Rosehill Racecourse for the annual Supershow

The NSW Caravan and Camping Supershow kicks off next weekend and is expected to see crowds flocking to Rosehill Racecourse during the week-long exhibition.

Over 300 exhibitors, featuring the latest in caravan and camping products, will be on show from Saturday, April 26 to Sunday, May 4.

"The Supershow is an excellent way for those people who haven't had any experience of camping or caravanning to get to know the products on offer in one easily accessible location," said Caravan & Camping Industry Association NSW President, Theo Whitmont.

"The Supershow has been a hugely successful event for many years because there's always something new to see, showcasing the latest products, gadgets and trends from cabins, to tents and RV's, new park offerings and experiences."

There will be entertainment, food, seminars and exhibitions from 10am all week long for a discounted price of \$15 for Seniors Card holders.

"The Supershow is a fantastic day out with the family and will help those who have been dreaming of purchasing their next caravan, adding to their camp gear or looking for an ideal holiday destination with the perfect place to see it all," Mr Whitmont said.

Visit www.supershow.com.au.

HOME COMFORTS: Bluesfest campers go glam with little luxuries

Glamping's pitch perfect

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TENTS, trailers, campervans and motorhomes – the Byron Bay Bluesfest had them all.

As hundreds of campers packed the Tyagarah Tea Tree Farm site, everything from the small and modest tent to the well equipped modern motorhome was on display.

And with so many campers on site, there was bound to be some glampers among them.

It's a glamorous form of camping where the simplicities of traditional camping are traded in for modern luxuries.

For Bluesfest camper Amanda Sharman, of the Sunshine Coast, glamping is all about creating an environment you feel comfortable in.

"If I'm somewhere for more than one night I'll make it comfortable," she said.

"Some people seem to think it is a competition but it's not a competition for me.

"I just like a nice place to come back to."

Ms Sharman's site in-



COSY: Amanda Sharman (at Bluesfest 2014) says glamping is all about creating a relaxing space.

PHOTO: LEAH WHITE

cludes a sky-blue 1975 convey van and a gazebo filled with colourful Tibetan prayers, wind chimes, curtains and Middle Eastern patterned pillows and blankets.

For Rebecca Tait, who is glamping with family from Mackay, Darwin and Newcastle, it's all about getting a good night's sleep.

"Last year I camped in a tent and neighbours talked all night," she said.

But this year she opted for something different.

"It (the campervan) is

quiet and it's comfortable and if it rains it's not too much bother," she said.

"It was also far easier for us to rent a camper than to lug around camping gear."



Liverpool Plains council continues to capitalise on caravanner visitors

LIVERPOOL Plains Shire Council has acknowledged the importance of caravan and motorhome travellers to the local economy.

At a recent meeting, director economic and community development Neil McGarry spoke to councillors about the NSW government's Tourism in Local Communities. Of particular interest to the council, Mr McGarry said, was research in the report that revealed those camping in self-contained vehicles spent more

than \$550 a week. "The Campervan and Motorhome Club suggested that these travellers are prepared to pay a small fee to stay in rest areas that provide basic facilities, such as access to water, rubbish bins and toilets," he said.

"Their research suggests their members spend an average of \$572 per week when on the road.

"This market is becoming increasingly important to tourism within the shire."

Another point of interest was a

survey that revealed 30 per cent of respondents who used a visitor information centre during their travels extended their stay to one or more nights.

"And 56 per cent spent extra money after that visit, on average an additional \$131," Mr McGarry said.

"The council is continuing to build on the success of its visitor information centre at Willow Tree to capitalise on this tourism potential."