



ATTRACTING TOURISTS

Plans to install dump point for caravans and motorhomes

MAIDENWELL Community Group is hoping to encourage more tourists to stop off overnight as they hatch plans to install a dump point for caravans and motorhomes at the oval. A grant from Stanwell will fund the installation, which is one of many improvements on the horizon for the town. President Gavin Jones said levelling works to the oval had just finished. He

said the group had also been working closely with South Burnett Regional Council to pipe water to the oval and public toilets in the main street. "The improvements are massive," he said. "We will work out from the oval into the middle of town with a walkway and we hope to have a few rocks with plaques with the history of town incorporating the cenotaph.



Pointing to better signage

Orbost and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called for better signage in Orbost to improve the experience of visitors to the town.

The chamber has written to the East Gippsland Shire Council calling for better signs indicating large vehicle parking options in the town, as well as a larger sign indicating the location of public toilets in Wolseley Street.

“For motorists travelling along Nicholson Street the only public toilet sign which they will encounter is at the corner of Nicholson Street and Tara Street pointing to Wolseley Street,” chamber secretary, Garry Squires, wrote.

Mr Squires noted the shire had adopted a framework aiming to provide an appropriate level of infrastructure and service to support recreational vehicle visitors to East Gippsland.

He said one of the key items of infrastructure was signage, particularly to direct large vehicles to parking reasonably close to the main business centre.

“There are sufficient options at the south end of Nicholson Street and near the visitor information centre in Clarke Street. However when vehicles get in to the middle of town the options are not readily apparent. Similarly, when vehicles come into Nicholson Street from the north the options are not readily apparent.

“There is one sign near the chemist pointing up Wolseley Street indicating ‘parking busses & cars’ however

the sign does not indicate large vehicle parking.”

East Gippsland Shire director development, Paul Holton, said the shire was working with the residents and businesses of the Orbost community in developing a plan for economic revitalisation of the town and broader district.

“Signage improvements could be considered as part of this broader plan – Advancing Orbost 2020,” Mr Holton said.

“Orbost, and surrounding communities, continue to face economic and social challenges arising from industry change and a declining population. At the same time, the Orbost community has many appealing assets, hence the increasing volume of recreational vehicle traffic.

“The shire would be happy to meet with representatives from the Orbost and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry to discuss the possibility of signage improvements,” Mr Holton said.

Oakey now more RV friendly

The town of Oakey has become more "RV friendly", as the owners of recreational vehicles like to say, following the installation of a new dump site.

Toowoomba Regional Council has installed the facility outside its York Street depot, close to the Lorrimer Street intersection.

The dump point enables those travelling in caravans and motorhomes to discard waste from their on-board storage into the town's sewerage system in an appropriate manner.

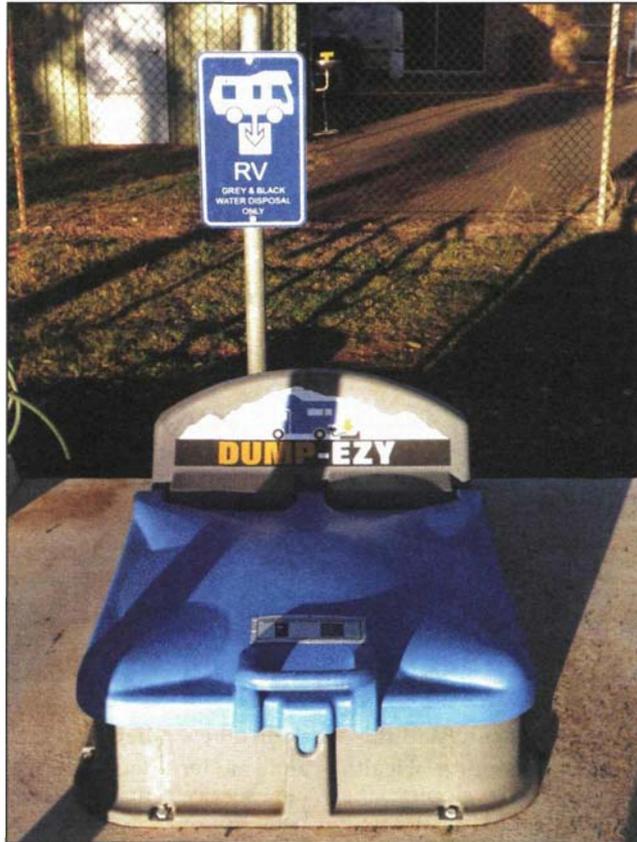
It is envisaged that the addition of the facility will enable Oakey to become well-known as an RV friendly town.

Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia lists the following as essential criteria for a town to be listed by it as RV Friendly:

- Provision of appropriate parking within the town centre, including access to a general shopping area with groceries or fresh produce.
- Provision of short term (24/48 hour) parking for self-contained vehicles within the town precinct.
- Access to potable water.
- Access to a free dump point within the town precinct.

The Club nominates the following attributes as "desirable" criteria for a town to qualify as RV Friendly:

- Provision of long term parking for self-contained vehicles.
- Access to medical facilities or an applicable evacuation plan
- Access to a pharmacy or a procedure to obtain



The new dump point in York Street, Oakey, which is available free of charge for users of caravans and motorhomes as they visit the local area.

pharmaceutical products.

- Visitor Information Centre (VIC) with appropriate parking facilities within a reasonable distance.
- VIC to provide a town map showing essential facilities such as the local hospital, medical services, fuel, shopping area, dump point, fresh water, etc.
- RV Friendly Town signs to

be erected within the town precinct.

Recognition as an RV friendly destination brings considerable benefits with an increasing number of "grey nomads" spreading across Queensland meaning local businesses are able to serve the needs of the increased number of tourists.



DISTRICT Council of Loxton Waikerie staff members Jamie Shrimpton (left) and Mark Mackareth conducting works at the short-term RV/caravan parking area last week. PHOTO: Ryneisha Bollard

New short-term park ready for RVs, caravans

RECREATIONAL vehicle (RV) and caravan users are stopping in Waikerie to use the town's new short-term parking area.

The District of Council of Loxton Waikerie (DCLW) recently completed major works at the civic centre lawns to provide a bitumised drive-in, along with a dumping point, garbage bins and potable water facilities.

DCLW chief executive officer Peter Ackland told *The River News* the site had

Ryneisha Bollard
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already been available for a number of weeks, but minor works were yet to be completed.

Mr Ackland said council still needed to conduct plantings to screen the area from the nearby Nippy's factory and Dowling Street residences.

He said kerbing of the drive-in was also being investigated, with considerations including

how well the park users were keeping to the designated area and what drainage would be required.

"We're just a little bit wary about how that might be managed," he said.

Mr Ackland said council staff had observed the park being occupied between three and seven times each day, with users providing positive feedback.

"I've heard that there has definitely been a good amount of use in there," he said.

"Our guys have been speaking to people who have

been using it as they drive past."

Signage has been installed on the highway and in town to guide motorists to the park, and the dumping point has been recognised on the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia website.

Mr Ackland said further promotional activities would be conducted to raise awareness of the park's existence.

"It will be starting to filter through the travelling public shortly," he added.



Caravan park owner calls on council to rethink free camping

A CARAVAN park owner says a Wattle Range Council proposal to allow free camping for motorhomes and self-contained caravans could slash income by \$50,000 a year.

Penola Caravan Park owner Henk Bruins made the claim when he addressed a recent council meeting in Millicent.

By-laws adopted by Wattle Range Council last year have prompted the Local Government body to explore the option across five sites in the Lower South East to clamp down on visitors staying in no camping zones.

Mr Bruins based the estimated financial loss on an average of six motorhomes per night opting to use the free areas provided by council rather than pay a nightly site fee of \$25 at caravan parks in the region.

The businessman said it equated to a total lost revenue of \$150 per night, \$1050 per week and \$54,000 per year.

“Even allowing for some extra costs such

as power to the parks for having those six motorhomes each night, you are still looking at a loss of revenue of about \$50,000 each year,” Mr Bruins said.

With his retirement on the horizon, Mr Bruins was concerned that the value of his park would be diminished if the turnover dropped as result of the introduction of free camping.

He said he was not concerned if free camping was allowed at places remote from towns, but having free facilities nearby was an issue.

“No matter how clean we make our caravan parks and no matter how friendly we are, nothing competes with free camping,” he said.

“My issues about the free camping proposal have been well covered in my correspondence to council but I just wanted to make you aware of the financial impact.

“I don’t think the objectives of council in providing free camping will be achieved.

“I don’t believe people will stay any longer and nor will they spend extra dollars in the community.”

In reply to a query from Cr Dale Price, Mr Bruins said his park had lifted its patronage by 30pc in the past 18 months under his management practices, but its occupancy levels were strongly determined by seasonal factors.

After Cr Rob Thornett raised the prospect of free camping being allowed at council’s Greenrise Lake property, Mr Bruins outlined past problems with some backpackers.

“There were times when we have had up to 20 people jump the fence and use our showers,” he said.

“I have had to spend \$5000 to erect a seven foot (two metre) fence on South Terrace to stop people sneaking in.

“We now lock the showers at about 9pm each night.”



Club frustrated with delays

Caravan group voices concerns after council meeting

MELISSA CUNNINGHAM

A LEADING recreational vehicle lobby group has voiced frustration at delays in moving forward with council proposals to establish freedom camping and free waste-disposal dumping points for caravans, campervans and motorhomes.

Earlier this month, Ballarat councillors voted to defer the two contentious items due to the city's request to seek legal assistance on the matters.

The legal assistance was sparked by an urgent letter submitted to the council by Victorian Caravan Parks Association chief executive officer Elizabeth White on the advice of her legal advisor, outlining

the concerns of the association.

But Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia board director Keith Moxham criticised the late submission of the Victorian Caravan Parks Association and said it had undermined a submission by CMCA, which had taken more than two years to create.

"CMCA and the City of Ballarat have been working together to make Ballarat recreational-vehicle friendly and boost the city's tourism industry for a number of years," Mr Moxham said.

"The Victorian Caravan Parks Association was free to raise any legal issues regarding Pioneer Park at any time during that process, but decided to do this only at the last minute."

Mr Moxham said in the past 10 years there had been a significant increase in the number of travellers in self-sufficient RVs with bathroom and toilet facilities preferring to access community-operated low-cost camps.

The CMCA is advocating for freedom camping at Pioneer Park along with a 12-month trial where existing caravan park operators allow visitors to dispose of their waste at their parks.

Mr Moxham said it would deliver

economic and social benefits to the city.

But Ms White denied the letter was a blocking tactic and that it had not been the intention of the association to cause any delay.

She said the association had been in discussions with the council on the dump point facilities for more than 18 months but had been unaware of the freedom camping proposal until the end of May.

"At that time, the council was developing a report on freedom camping, which was not complete until July," Ms White said.

"I awaited the completion of the council report to see what it entailed. Following that, I went to

get further legal advice on the matter and the approval of caravan park owners before putting forward my submission."

City of Ballarat's acting chief executive officer Natalie Reiter said reports on freedom camping and dump point voucher trials were prepared for council consideration at last week's meeting but both reports had been adjourned.

Ms Reiter said further advice was being sought on both items and they would be considered again by the council in the coming weeks.

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Caravan park owner urges council to rethink free camping plan

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Free campsite concern

Park operator claims \$50,000 potential income loss

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FREEBIE BACKLASH: A Penola caravan park operator has addressed a recent council meeting to raise concerns over the adoption of free campsites in the Wattle Range area.



RV support

SIR – The cost of establishing an RV facility is \$34,000.

An extra \$20,000 to install a security camera on a dump point.

It would be the only one in Australia.

Does the council know what a dump point is?

They claim ongoing maintenance would cost about \$21,250 a year.

Where do they get the figures from?

Kapunda has opened a camp spot for RVs.

I rang the council (and asked) what were the costs of establishing a RV site.

They paid half the cost of a dump point cost.

Having travelled in our motor home for the past 15 years, where possible we stayed at RV-friendly towns.

A town called Home Hill, like Gawler, was dying, shops were closing, the council allowed RVs to stay free of charge.

The town is now booming.

Tasmania Yacht Club had trouble with vandals; they offered free sites for RVs, no more vandals.

Goose Island is ideal for RVs.

A short walk and you are in the main street.

The water is already connected, all the council has to do is cut the grass.

If it floods, shut the gate.

**Don Raggatt,
Gawler.**



Social media storm may have promoted Monto

THEY say any publicity is good publicity, and that might be the case for Monto following the Big4 Caravan Park social media uproar earlier this month.

“There is no way I would head north now and not go to Monto,” said Caravanning and Motorhome Club of

Australia chairman Vincent Moran.

“Whoever read about Monto before this? That’s one good thing Peter Rankin has done – he has put Monto on the map,” Mr Moran said.

Despite the anti-free-camping message in Cania Gorge Big 4 Caravan Park owner Peter Rankin’s petition (CNBT, May 29),

dozens have pledged to support the town on Free Choice Camping’s Facebook page. The letter may have had the opposite effect to that it intended.

Monto Magic Tourism Action Group president Lyn Tucker said the group had

been focused on damage control since the letter was published and she had not thought much about positives to come from it.

“But there have certainly been a lot of caravans pulling up lately,” Ms Tucker said.

“I’m sure they aren’t going to the caravan park,

but they might do the rest of the town some good,” she said.

“I also read about a bloke

from Tasmania saying he had never heard about Monto before but he wanted to come and have a look at the place now.”

CMCA chief executive officer Richard Barwick

said: “The travelling network is incredible when it comes to talking.

“I can get a message to Darwin quicker than a person could on the phone,” Mr Barwick said.

“It might not be the same message once it gets there, but it will arrive in some form or another,” he said.