



# \$300k bill for tourist centre

BY MELISSA CUNNINGHAM

HUNDREDS of thousands of dollars was pumped into the controversial relocation of the city's Tourist Information Centre.

Declining visitor numbers and a series of unsuitable potential sites plagued the former Lydiard Street centre for three years, before Ballarat councillors voted to relocate the office to the Town Hall in 2014, in a bid to secure its future for up to 20 years.

Figures obtained by *The Courier* revealed the cost of the relocation was substitutional. More than \$316,000 was spent on the entire relocation with Ballarat Regional Tourism reportedly spending \$150,000 on fitting out the new office space including installing carpet, displays stands and computer equipment.

Figures revealed the cost for moving the east wing office to the west wing of the city's Town Hall to make room for the information

centre was more than \$97,000. Road works to reseal Armstrong Street cost almost \$40,000 while other works to ensure surrounding streets were suitable for larger recreational vehicles cost more than \$28,000.

Originally, the town hall's west wing was to be the new home of the centre, but those plans were scrapped. Instead, the centre was sit-

uated in the east wing of the building, near the foyer on Bath Lane, because it has greater disability access from the rear car park. Ballarat councillor Vicki Coltman said while it may seem like a significant cost it was an investment into the city's future.

"We had more than fifty thousand people come to the city for the Archibald exhibition last year and half a million people visit Sovereign Hill," Cr Coltman said. "People are coming to Ballarat and they are coming in larger numbers every year

so it's fantastic to be able to provide a tourism centre which inside one of our most historic buildings."

The relocation was the subject of controversy when it was approved by the council last year. The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia feared the relocation of the Ballarat Visitor Information Centre to the Town Hall would hurt tourist numbers unless the parking situation at the new location was radically improved.

*The Courier* understands numbers have significantly increased since the relocation. Centre volunteers report there has been an influx frequenting the centre due to the office being more centrally located and easier to find. The Courier sought comment from the council and is awaiting a response.



## ROADSIDE PERSISTENCE

# Logan stops work a treat

## Park and pride: Council gets it right with new RV-friendly facilities

TRAVELLERS making use of the self-contained recreational vehicle circuit in Logan have given the new facilities the tick of approval.

The dedicated facilities at Hugh Muntz Gardens in Beenleigh and Tully Memorial Park in North Maclean have been filled to near capacity in recent weekends.

Logan City councillor Trevina Schwarz said it wasn't surprising both locations had proven popular as they are ideally located for travellers looking for an overnight rest stop.

"Council has worked together over the past two years to find just the right locations that have the right mix of existing facilities and the right location to capture passing recreational vehicle traffic," she said.

"Both locations are on major highways and offer great amenity for RV travellers looking for a rest and for a short stop to explore Logan.

"I understand both parks

have been fully utilised in recent weeks, a great endorsement of our city as a travel destination for short stays."

A working group of councillors led by Cr Laurie Smith worked in partnership with the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) to determine the locations and provide appropriate facilities.

"Grey nomads, recreation vehicle and motorhome enthusiasts are one of the largest single groups of travelling tourists and with several major highways linking through and around Logan it makes sense to build facilities that will bring in more visitors to the city," he said.

Cr Jennie Breene said the facilities helped highlight the city had much to offer passing traffic.

"Beenleigh is the perfect spot between Brisbane and the Gold Coast to pull up and put the brakes on for a night or for a few, with plenty to see and do," she said.



» REST STOP: Logan City councillors Jennie Breene, Laurie Smith, Trevina Schwarz, CMCA's Richard Mainey and Cr Cherie Dalley at Hugh Muntz Gardens. PHOTO: DAVID SHAW