



Tidy up the freeloaders

Why should East Gippsland Shire allow campers to stay in designated zones in Lakes Entrance for free, when it's not proved they spend money in the town?

Lakes Entrance's Deb McTighe cannot see a future for designated free parking areas for campervans and recreation vehicles (RVs) in town.

While the owner of Riviera Country Caravan Park understands shire's vision to possibly trial free parking at the Gippsland Lakes Fishing Club car park and atop Jemmys Point at Rotary Park, she believes the campers who do not holiday with local accommodation providers don't put enough money back into the economy.

East Gippsland Shire councillor and fellow Lakes Entrance resident, Dick Ellis, said council's plan to trial short term overnight parking zones would reduce the scatter of the 'Wicked' vans and other RVs, some of whom don't pay for accommodation and can be seen scattered in locations throughout the town.

"We want to gain economic value, need it to be in one place and not look untidy," he said.

"Council already has something like this in place at Genoa, and low-fee camp parks at Cann River and Swift's Creek, to encourage people to go and get off-road," he said.

The council said parking would be allowed for two hours between 10am and 6pm and would be unrestricted outside these hours, with tent camping not allowed.

Appropriate new signage at these sites will be provided, detailing restrictions and general information on nearest dump points, caravan parks etc.

But Ms McTighe, who was asked by the shire to join a concept plan for RV camping committee about three years ago, said the shire was "not looking after the caravan park industry at all" with

its handling of the process.

"I do understand that not everyone wants to stay in a park, but they don't spend money in Lakes when they are here," she said.

"They are fuelling up in Bairnsdale, buying their groceries at Aldi in Bairnsdale, and buying their goods in cheaper places.

"Do they buy a newspaper here? Who knows?"

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Camping issues on the agenda

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"(EGSC mayor) Peter Neal believed they bought food here because it was fresh and they can't carry it, but the ones I see are eating two-minute noodles.

"It's a couple of bucks in the economy, but as ratepayers it's costing us more to clean up their mess.

"They are not going on boat cruises and I don't

know how many of them would dine out, so I don't understand why it's okay shire think they should travel for free, when someone else has to pick up their bill."

Ms McTighe, however, said she would support the zoned RV areas if they were policed regularly, with everything between "A and Z" checked off the list.

"They said they wanted to put them in one place, and I said that's fine.

"But who's going to police the areas? Where are the bylaws officers?"

"They're taking over car parks for anglers, parking for boats. Why do it?"

"And Jemmys Point is the eighth wonder of the world," she said.

The issue is listed for discussion on the Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association agenda tonight.



Call to promote Calder tour idea

Eight towns in rural Queensland have combined to launch a unique 'Cobb and Co' tourist route in an effort to attract visitors to a region by-passed by a major freeway. The idea has merit, and is certainly worth pursuing locally, according to Alan Cameron, a long-time campaigner for Mildura, and a keen traveller. He says this could be 'The Highway to Heaven' in a ...

By ALAN ERSKINE

ON a touring holiday through Queensland, Mildura Recreational Vehicle enthusiast Alan 'Sandy' Cameron was impressed by the concept of the new 'Cobb and Co' tourist route that stretches along 'the back roads' from Ipswich to Toowoomba.

The new route is being promoted as a relaxing, entertaining, scenic and more casual tourist route than the new freeway that by-passes eight townships once serviced by the highway.

According to 'Sandy,' RIGHT, the route is drawing a growing number of tourists, in a variety of recreational vehicles, breathing new life into towns that had been by-passed by the modern freeway.

He was so impressed by the concept that he has suggested we do the same in regional Victoria, where 10 small to medium-size townships have, over the years, been 'forced' off the beaten track as the Calder Freeway has been extended and improved.

'Sandy' said the idea is for travellers to enjoy a relaxing holiday in the Garden State, while helping to develop a touring route of significance, similar to what is happening in Queensland.

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"The Calder is a 500 kilometre stretch of road that can be completed in stages, between Melbourne to Mildura, with plenty to see and do, and lots of towns to visit to break up the trip," he said.

"And the best part is that most of these townships are RV-friendly. With the right promotion, the Calder touring route could have lasting benefits for the towns now by-passed by the freeway.

"For travellers not hell-bent on getting from one end of the highway to the other in the shortest possible time, this plan would enable them to explore and enjoy what the towns and the regions that surround them have to offer. And in my experience, that's plenty."

'Sandy' said the touring route could be widely promoted throughout metropolitan Melbourne in a bid to lure a good percentage of four million people to start a holiday at Keilor, and gradually work their way through to Mildura, enjoying national parks, the Great Dividing Range, Forests, plains, small town hospitality and a range of unique attractions along the way.

"For RV travellers, Ouyen, Sea Lake, Charlton, Wedderburn, Bridgewater and Kyneton are all RV-friendly towns," he said. "It's an RV-friendly route, with huge potential for the future.

"There are some great towns just off the beaten track - Lake

Boga, Swan Hill, Serpentine, Boort, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs, Castlemaine, Marybor-

ough, Maldon, St Arnaud, Warracknabeal, Hopetoun, Lascelles and others - all with something of interest for the traveller."

'Sandy' said there were historical sites, old gold fields, wine and fresh fruit regions, a range of boutique industries, museums, walking and/or bike tracks, scenic lookouts, art, crafts, cultural events, sporting shows, parades

and many other attractions for visitors to enjoy at their own pace.

The last stage of their journey would be especially interesting, with people enjoying Ouyen, the home of prime Mallee lamb and the new Ouyen Lake project, Hattah National Park, Red Cliffs with attractions such as Big Lizzie, markets, Murray River Cliffs and bric a brac shops, with Mildura-on-the-Murray the eventual destination.

According to 'Sandy,' if promoted properly, and widely, the idea could open up a whole new potential traveller for some, most, or all regions, especially Mildura, which already has a reputation as a great tourist destination.

"For a start there's our amazing fruit industry, providing produce Australia-wide and to overseas



markets, we've got a Mediterranean climate, it's a paradise for water sports, house boating and other activities, arts and crafts, great retail sectors and the best wining and dining in Australia," he said.

"Whether people are newcomers to RV travel, or a seasoned and well-travelled 'Grey Nomad,' what better way to enjoy a leisurely week, especially for Melbournians, than to explore what regional Victoria has to offer.

"And for those who don't take their own accommodation with them, there's a great range of accommodation, motels, bed and breakfasts, caravan parks, motels and backpacking hostels to suit all tastes, and budgets. Plus lots of free camping spots, many of them alongside the Murray River.

"In a nutshell, the Calder

Highway touring route is ready, willing and able."

'Sandy' says he is promoting the alternative route idea through the media, and groups such as the Caravan Industry Association of Australia, which is organising the 61st Victorian Camping, Camping and Touring 'Supershow' at the Melbourne Showgrounds this week.

He is also using a long association as the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's North-West Victorian representative to promote 'The Calder Highway to Heaven Holiday route' within CMCA's 65,000 members, with help from the association's representative for western Victoria, Kyneton's Rex Breen.



