



ELWOOD

They're baaaaaack: campers pack Elwood

Dana McCauley

THE Elwood foreshore is the place to be for backpackers and their campervans, after a crackdown at Sandridge beach pushed the freeloaders southward.

When the Leader visited at 10am last Tuesday morning, dozens of vans crowded the Elwood beach car park, blatantly flouting parking restrictions, while their occupants roused themselves.

Elwood resident David Frank called on authorities to act, complaining of vans parked in the spot every night and tents pitched on the foreshore.

Mayor Amanda Stevens said the council could not replicate the Sandridge solution as the campervans were

on a public road.

“Parking (there) can’t be restricted at certain hours of the day or night and access can’t be blocked with a gate,” Cr Stevens said.

She said travellers simply ignored parking fines left on their windscreens, but promised to “work towards a solution”.

St Kilda Police Senior Sergeant Mark Denton said police understood residents’ concerns and would work with the council, which last month erected signs at the Sandridge Life Saving Club car park, enabling police to move backpackers on and issue on-the-spot fines.

 **Are you frustrated by camping backpackers?**
portphillipleader.com.au



One of the campervans, with a tent pitched on top, spotted at Elwood foreshore carpark on March 10.

Picture: Martin Reddy



Neighbours make RV list

WALGETT and Collarenebri have joined the list of nearly 50 locations across NSW with the RV Friendly Town status.

An RV friendly town provides minimum accommodation needs of RV travelers, including camper vans, motor homes and caravans.

Walgett Shire Council general manager, Don Ramsland, said the shire's accreditation would attract a large number of travellers.

"We're expecting to see a number of nomads stopping through," Mr Ramsland said.

Research showed RV travelers spent between \$500 to \$900 a week on a range of products and services which made a real impact on the local businesses.

He said he expected the tourism hot spots in the shire to be a massive draw card to travellers.

"There's a lot of Indigenous culture out here people don't know about," Mr Ramsland said.

From marked trees to burial sites, Mr Ramsland said the district offered a lot to travelling tourists.

He said it was difficult to place a figure on the number of RV vans they expected to see in the town from the accreditation.



Securing region's tourism future

A NEW strategy adopted by Fraser Coast Regional Council could boost the region's caravanning and camping tourism sector by as much as \$400 million annually in direct overnight expenditure by 2020.

Council formerly adopted the Fraser Coast Camping Options Strategy last week and while the figure is optimistic at best, Deputy Mayor and Councillor for Tourism, Marketing and Communications Stuart Taylor said it was something to work towards in the coming years.

The strategy was developed by the Fraser Coast Camping Stakeholders Group which comprised representatives from the caravan industry, chambers of commerce and Council and was chaired by Hervey Bay Chamber of Commerce treasurer Geoff Redpath.

It featured 24 recommendations to Council, including introducing Stop and Shop sites in Maryborough and Hervey Bay; retaining Petrie Park near Tiaro as a designated Bush Camping site; expanding the existing RV site at Bauple and investigating an additional RV parking area within the Glenwood township.

The Stop and Shop sites, four in Maryborough to augment those



Council hopes to boost the Fraser Coast's tourism industry by offering incentives to draw more campers and caravanners to the region's hot spots.

in the McDowell Car Park in the CBD and up to eight in Hervey Bay, would be designated parking areas which would allow for up to 20 hours parking for visitors who spend at least \$10 in a local business.

"Australians have a unique sense of adventure and a need to explore," Mr Redpath said.

"This strategy recognises the value of the industry and the need to keep pace with evolving markets, competition and changing consumer dynamics.

"The recommendations are designed to promote the Fraser Coast as a great destination."

Camping, caravanning and RVs are a significant sector of the nation's tourism industry worth \$6.5 billion annually.

In the Fraser Coast alone, the sector injects around \$360 million annually into the local economy through direct overnight expenditure.

"We'd like to increase that figure to about \$759 million by 2020," Cr Taylor said.

"Growth in the drive market, with a particular emphasis on camping, will help us reach that target."



Council adopts camping strategy

EXPANDING bush camping sites across the Fraser Coast, installing more dump points and stop and shop areas in Hervey Bay and Maryborough are recommendations from the Fraser Coast Camping Options Strategy adopted by the council recently.

The strategy was developed by the Fraser Coast Camping Stakeholders Group which comprised representatives from the caravan industry, chambers of commerce and the council and chaired by Geoff Redpath.

Included in the 24 recommendations are that the council investigate introducing stop and shop sites in Maryborough and Hervey Bay; retain Petrie Park near Tiaro as a designated bush camping

site; expand the existing RV site at Bauple and investigate an additional RV parking area within the Glenwood township.

The stop and shop spaces – four in Maryborough to augment those in the McDowell car park in the Maryborough CBD and up to eight in Hervey Bay.

The free sites would be designated parking areas in close proximity to the CBD which would allow for up to 20 hours parking for visitors who spend at least \$10 in a local business.

“Australians have a unique sense of adventure and a need to explore,” Mr Redpath said. “Camping, caravanning and RVs are a significant industry worth \$6.5 billion annually.

“There is no reason why this region cannot become

the Queensland destination of choice for camping, caravanning and RV users.”

Tourism is a key driver of the Fraser Coast economy, injecting \$360 million through direct overnight expenditure, Fraser Coast Deputy Mayor and tourism, marketing and communications portfolio councillor Stuart Taylor said.

“We’d like to increase that figure to about \$759 million by 2020. A particular emphasis on camping, will help us reach that target.

“Our investigation indicated that Petrie Park should be retained as a bush camping site; the Bauple RV Site could be easily expanded and there was a need for more facilities at Tiaro Memorial Park.

“Research showed that 77% of Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia members would be willing to pay \$10 per night to stay in this form of camping facility,” Cr Taylor said.

“The funds would be used to complete the upgrades and maintain the bush facilities to attract more people to the region.”

The recommendations also call on the council to review its planning laws to facilitate the establishment of new camping and caravan parks; offer incentives to attract investors to the region; review local laws to tackle illegal camping and install more dump points to encourage caravans and RVs off the highway into the region.



Grey nomads hunt for glamorous vans

BY OLIVIA SHYING

WAGGA's taste for caravanning has grown in the past seven years, with thousands of people packing the city's showground for the Home and Leisure Show over the weekend.

Gone are the days when caravanning meant hopping in a hot, cramped tin cabin and living on the bare necessities.

In 2015, caravans can cost up to \$125,000 and be as luxurious as a five-star hotel room.

Event organiser Jeff Leech said 10,000 people flocked to the premier event on Saturday and Sunday.

"We have over 250 caravans and boats on display," Mr Leech said.

"We've had record crowds - with outdoor living, caravans, camper vans and boats on display."

Home turf celebrity chef Ryan Dedini gave out handy cooking tips and demonstrations so campers could ensure they were enjoying fine dining and enjoy glamorous camping or 'glamping'.

"This is a major annual for Wagga," Mr Leech said.

"Families love coming here and realising that they can travel for a great price."

City RV owner Chris Dennis was showing the masses through a fifth wheeler car-

van that gave a new meaning to the term luxury camping.

The Ultima Classic - that starts at \$65,000 and goes up to \$125,000 - is designed in America.

It is designed to be towed by a ute - meaning that it has extra space.

"It is a 30 foot long van, but towing it is the same as towing a 22 foot van, because the extra length goes over the back of the ute," he said.

He has sold the van, first designed in 2007, for the past 12 months.

It has all the bells and whistles - including a metre of extra room that can slide out with the touch of a button when the van is stationary.

"It has ducted air-conditioning, a television that pops up and electric awnings.

"It is designed in America but built for Australian conditions."

The van also ticks all the energy efficiency boxes.

"The fridge is a smart fridge that can run off gas when there is not electricity supply.

"The toilet system also operates like a septic tank and is 120 litres."

Mr Dennis said "grey nomads" were the main purchasers of the fifth wheelers.

"Most people who buy this are thinking about living in it for a few months.

"Sometimes they might use it as a bit of tester before they go to move into a retirement home.

"Once someone buys a fifth wheeler they never turn back."

Mr Leech said people had travelled from as far as Orange, Griffith and Leeton to check out the caravans.

"Having an event this size helps the local economy."



GLAMOROUS VANS: Lagoon Caravans employee Adam Demetrius shows off a swish caravan at the Home and Leisure Show. **Picture: Les Smith**