



Mixed views on RV status

By MOLLY BAXTER

MIXED views have been raised over Esperance becoming an RV-Friendly town at a public submissions session this week.

The Shire of Esperance held an RV-Friendly Public Submissions Session on Tuesday which saw eight speakers from around Esperance give their views on the trial.

Becoming RV-Friendly would mean there was a low-cost camping area provided for fully self-contained vehicles to park up for the night. There has been two potential sites identified in the Esperance town site - the corner of Black Street and Harbour Road inside the Greater Sports Ground and the vacant land opposite the Civic Centre and behind the Shire Administration Building on Council Place.

Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Western Australia state representative Bevin Martin said research suggested RV tourists would move on because Esperance did not offer both commercial and low-cost, non-commercial options.

He said independent research from Tourism Research Australia had found about 34 per cent of RV tourists only used caravan parks, 16 per cent never used caravan parks and 50 per cent used both caravan parks and low-cost, non-commercial accommodation options.

Mr Martin said the CMCA estimated that providing low-cost accommodation for a maximum of eight RVs could generate up to \$800 a day in additional revenue for the town or about \$5600 a week.

"I stress we are talking about additional revenue and not revenue relocated from a caravan park," he said.

"I don't really understand why anyone would be opposed to this trial.

"It provides a chance for all sides of the debate to have their opinions

I don't really understand why anyone would be opposed to this trial. It provides a chance for all sides of the debate to have their opinions tested, which the CMCA believes is in the best interest of the Esperance community.

Bevin Martin,
CMCA WA state representative

tested, which the CMCA believes is in the best interests of the Esperance community."

Acclaim Holiday Parks chief executive Sally Chacko presented several photographs to council showing disrespect for the low cost camping options.

Her photos, which were taken in August, showed vehicles that were not fully self-contained using the overnight services provided in Kalgoorlie.

"Many are not fully self contained vehicles, instead they are just vans with a mattress chucked in the back." Ms Chacko said.

However, Gibson Soak owner Phil Waddington presented an instant solution to councillors and said his land could be turned into a RV-Friendly spot within the next couple of days if need be.

He said the land could be turned into a drive-in, drive-out, or "herring-bone facility" where up to 60 bays and 30 "big rigs" could be catered for.

"We can offer reasonable rates to fully self contained vehicles," he said.

Councillors raised the issue of distance between the town and Gibson.

Council will make a decision at the next Ordinary Council Meeting.



Free camping trial reviewed by council

Lisa Tisdell
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MORE research during the peak summer season will provide greater insights into free camping behaviour.

A free camping management trial started in early September with the placement of No Camping signs in hotspot locations and the distribution of a brochure.

A progress report on the free camping management trial and research will be tabled at Port Macquarie-Hastings Council's meeting tonight.

More than 140 free camper and community surveys have been completed but no significant trends can be drawn from the information so far due to the small sample size, the council business paper said.

The three most popular free camping locations to date are Settlement Point, Town Beach and Shelly Beach, although campers have been found in various coastal locations. The majority of the campers surveyed were staying in the region as a stopover.

Research indicates No Camping signs did not have a significant impact on camping locations with just over half of campers surveyed in hotspot locations reporting they did not see the signs.

Councillors will also consider a report on RV friendly towns.

Council staff members have worked with community stakeholders in Wauchope and Kendall to

assess and cost works needed to support RV Friendly Town accreditation. RV friendly towns in NSW include Dungog, Uralla, Wingham, Kempsey and Griffith.

The Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia research shows there are more than 500,000 registered RVs in Australia, with RV travellers set to increase by 60 per cent over the next decade.

RV travellers spend on average between \$500 and \$900 a week.

Other items on the council meeting agenda include the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, Kendall Tennis Club, and towns and village signs.

The council meeting is at Port Macquarie-Hastings Council chambers in Burrawan Street from 5.30pm today.



Every town should be RV friendly

DO you think Esperance should be RV friendly? I'm surprised this question even has to be asked.

Every town should be RV-Friendly if it wants to capitalise on the spending power of grey nomads and younger travellers passing through.

Esperance only stands to lose if it isn't, despite what the fear-mongers tell you.

In fact, it's their greed and self-interest that is putting small businesses in Esperance at risk.

Evidence across Australia shows that when a town is RV-Friendly everyone benefits – including the caravan parks – because even those who free-camp usually need a caravan park every third or fourth night.

It's sad WA is rapidly becoming viewed as the most expensive destination in Australia and the least RV friendly, as it's beginning to put people off.

Given each RV spends an average \$500 per week as it travels (fuel, food, souvenirs, coffee, take-away, camping fees), the more they have to spend in caravan parks the less they have to spend elsewhere.

There's plenty of research to show towns that are RV-Friendly reap considerable rewards (including the caravan parks), but people also have to realise most travelers' budgets are set or quite limited (\$500 a week is about the age pension for a couple), so they will bypass unfriendly towns (which they find out about on the bush telegraph, social media) to make their money go further.

Richard Robertson
Bowral, NSW



Travellers call for public dump area

By **VANESSA BURGESS**

LOCAL fifth wheeler caravan and big-rig owners are calling on the Alpine Shire Council to install a free public dump point in Bright.

Bright resident Yvonne Huggins recently returned from a four month holiday around Australia in her fifth wheeler caravan and said the township of Bright was in desperate need of a public dump point for black water.

"Fifth wheelers have a holding tank for black and grey water which can last up to two weeks," she said.

"I noticed there were free public dump points at a lot of towns in Australia when I was travelling recently, and yet when I get home there's nowhere for me to put the black water."

Ms Huggins said both Bright and Myrtleford have a dump point in a caravan park, but there was a \$5 fee to use the facility and manoeuvring such a large caravan in a smaller caravan park was close to impossible.

"People who travel in big-rigs or fifth wheelers don't need to stay in a caravan park - that's why we bought them because we want to be able to stay anywhere we want," she said.

"We would struggle to fit our fifth wheeler into the smaller caravan parks in town.

"And when people can't find a free public dump point they are likely to dump it on the side of the road...I've seen it happen."

Freeburgh residents and big-rig owners David and Lyn Fricke echoed Ms Huggins' sentiments and said their 19 metre rig and trailer simply couldn't fit in many of the

smaller caravan parks.

"We have owned a motor home since 1997 and we know we can't access many caravan parks in Australia," Mr Fricke said.

"With the trailer attached our vehicle is the same length as a semi-trailer.

Mrs Fricke said the Campervan Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) provide specification of dump points so that little, middle and large caravans and motorhomes can access the dump point easily.

"CMCA also supply the unit so there will be little cost to the council except for a bit of finishing off work," she said.

"We are hoping that Bright could become an 'RV friendly'

town and in the process save the environment from having people's waste dumped near our rivers and roads."

Bright and District Tourist Park Group chair and Pine Valley Tourist Park owner David Pratt said he had put a brief into Alpine Shire Council about subsidising costs for RV owners needing to use a private dump point.

"At Pine Valley Tourist Park, we charge \$5 for people to dump and we are hoping council will provide motor home and

caravan owners with a free \$5 voucher they can use at one of the 16 parks within the Alpine Shire who are willing to be part of the dump point program," he said.

"That way people can dispose of their black water legally and at no cost.

"I've sent a brief with some key points to all councillors and I've asked them to read it before we have a briefing session in December."

Alpine Shire Council CEO Dave Barry said council was

aware of the public dump point issue and said a decision would be made in the new year.

"This issue is often raised and it will be up to council to determine whether or not to put in a free council owned and managed public dump point in Bright," he said.

"There is a dump point in both Myrtleford and Bright that motorhome users can access for \$5.

"Council needs to take into account the views of the business owners, who ultimately pay wages through rates and how a public dump point would impact them, but also pay attention to caravan and camping associations who are encouraging councils all over Australia to install free dump points.

"We don't want to impact on any business by providing a free service that will impact on their revenue."

Mr Barry said council will listen to business representatives on one side of the conversation and campers and caravan association representatives on the other side in December.

"We will hear both sides of the argument and then compile a report to give to councillors early next year," he said.

"Councillors will then determine whether a free dump point will be installed.

"At the end of the day, no matter the decision, one side will be satisfied and the other won't."



SOLUTION NEEDED: Bright Chamber of Commerce secretary Brendan Holland, big-rig owners Lyn and David Fricke (second from right), fifth wheel owner Yvonne Huggins and Bright and District Tourist Park Group chair David Pratt are hoping a solution can be found to the problem.



WELCOME SIGN FOR RV VISITORS

REX MARTINICH

SOUTHERN Grampians Shire Council has voted to promote Greater Hamilton as a “destination that welcomes RVs (recreational vehicles)” and develop dedicated facilities for them.

The shire will partner with the tourist industry to promote the region and create dedicated short term parking options and visitor information for RV users.

The new initiative will be aimed at short and long stay RV users.

Any provision of services to the RV market will have to be measured against the shire’s competitive neutrality principles.

Councillor Paul Battista raised the issue that perhaps the shire was acting too hastily and might affect the current accommodation market in Hamilton.

Shire futures director Michael McCarthy told councillors that the shire’s report urged that that economic value of RV travellers should be recognised.

“This report comes about from people coming to council, different groups, asking council to provide low or no-cost recreational vehicle parking options, associated with the facilities to support overnight stays,” he said.

“We have a situation in Hamilton that we provide a lot of facilities for recreation vehicles; we certainly have quite a lot of adequate parking close to shops.

Mr McCarthy said there were already visitor information facilitates and literature for RV users and other

commercial facilities such as caravan parks and sewage dump points.

“The investigations did identify that there were further opportunities in the shire to better promote the region as a RV friendly location and most of that is in better promotion of existing services,” he said.

The shire will look at improving marketing and signage for those parking, sewage and accommodation services.

Cr Albert Calvano said he was “very passionate” about RV stopovers in Hamilton.

“I have an RV and I ask, to attract RV vehicles to Hamilton, what do we mean by ‘short stay’?” he said.

Mr McCarthy said it would depend of the location identified.

“There are local laws and there are other regulatory processes, for example if it was in a State or National Park,” he said.

“Certainly 24 hours in some places, two hours in others, three days in others.”

Cr Bruach Colliton said he would like to add to the motion that the shire monitor the success of the initiative and review it after 12 months.

Cr Battista said he had concerns about the initiative and the shire should slow down and “get the data”.

“I think this is a bit green for me,” he said.

“We have our hotel owners, our caravan owners; I think we have to tread carefully about how we do this.

“The more strategic we are and the better organised we are about doing this, the better it will set us up in the

future.”

Mayor Peter Dark said the review, if council agreed, should go some way to allaying Cr Battista’s concerns.

Cr Calvano said RV users brought “an economic impact that directly benefits our regional centres”.

Cr Colliton said “Hamilton is a great tourism destination, and we are improving on that on a daily basis, and I appreciate and in fact agree with some of what Cr Battista is saying but I don’t want to take any longer”.

“Cr Calvano has said some great things, the reality for the economy is that tourism is looking like one of the things looking most optimistic at this stage.”

The motion was then passed, as Cr Battista was convinced to support the motion.



GIRLS JUST LOVE THE RACES: Dunkeld was the place to be on Saturday for the town's annual race meeting. In typical fashion, thousands of people converged on the town to enjoy a good day's racing in a party atmosphere. Among those in party mode were Hamilton's Krystle Ractliffe and Jess Jones. More pictures: Pages 10 and 19. Photo: MICHAEL HANNA. 141115mh119





■ Five years ago

WAGIN was the 12th West Australian town to be recognised as Recreational Vehicle Friendly. The Wagin Shire council entered into an agreement with West Australian representatives of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia.

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COUNCILLOR Michele Brown opened the 69th Dumbleyung Bluebird Festival and gave a thought provoking speech about community volunteers and their special talent.

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WAGIN District High School joined forces with members of the Wagin Returned Services League sub-branch to celebrate Remembrance Day

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THE Wagin community was warned about snakes coming into the summer. Residents Bradley and Melissa McDermott had an unwelcome visitor in the garden of their Tudhoe Street property where a dugite was sighted.

□□□

WAGIN Cycling Group members raised \$950 for the local youth centre with a cake stall.

□□□

THE Wagin District High School held a reunion for school leavers from 1974.



TRICKY PROBLEM:
Illegal camping in
Tennyson Street,
Byron Bay.

Freedom camping options may make a buck

BYRON Bay's perennial "vanpacker" camping problem could be solved by renting out carparks at night or landowners stepping in to offering accommodation, Byron Shire councillors heard yesterday

The ideas were among those floated as the council voted to back a "freedom camping" proposal put forward by Cr Paul Spooner to entice travellers away from

illegal camping in residential streets.

Councillors will now workshop a plan for cheap camping sites for RV tourists such as grey nomads or "vanpackers" and invite expressions of interest from camping providers for a 12-month trial.

This would herald a change from a zero-tolerance approach of issuing fines, Cr Spooner said.

"I've travelled in a kombi

van in my time and I would have loved this idea," he said.

"They are largely self-contained and they don't need sites with bells and whistles."

As well as inviting EOIs from primitive camping providers, the town's car parks could be rented out at \$10 a night, the council heard.

Cr Diane Woods suggested renting out Lawson Street car parking sites from 10pm

to 10am, while Mayor Simon Richardson suggested the council's sports complex car park at Ewingsdale.

"It has parking for 350 or they could camp on the oval. It's away from residents and we may even make a dollar," he said.

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Letter to the Editor

Looking after the nomads

TO THE Editor – Re: Phil puts brakes on RV friendly idea (Phil Barton's letter, last Friday).

Phil, cut out the grey nomad reference, it is not nice.

What a negative approach and poor excuses offered. I walk around the racecourse most mornings and the rubbish is disgusting but not a caravan in sight. Besides nomads very rarely have Kentucky Fried, Maccas or energy drinks (the drinks may not work, the drinkers can not open a garbage bin).

One can only fit so much essential goods and have to shop no matter where we are. I do not believe there is impact on van parks who do not capably provide for nomads. What about the rest of the shops who would benefit?

Anyhow we already know Tumut does not want nomads and I was suggesting Adelong or Batlow would benefit.

I should have not quoted a Queensland village but perhaps Coleambally, Deniliquin, Finley, Hay, Lake Cargelligo, Manilla or Young as I have stayed at these places and was made welcome.

Gundagai, another close town to Tumut – I've stayed there – and tell my friends to stay there as a base.

Perhaps the RSL, a pub or golf club could become RV friendly destinations, even Coles with a little bit of thought.

Getting back to Adelong and Batlow, both have van parks which could cope with an area for self contained vehicles. Both have plenty to see and do plus good shops, perhaps one that could become an RV friendly destination.

As for limited season, it could be almost all year with everything on the door step, the Snowy scheme, dams, river (sort of), forests, snow season, autumn, winter, spring, summer more than most towns.

Come on Batlow and/or Adelong, start looking after the nomads, you are nicer places anyway.

Yours etc,

John Ballard,
Tumut

RV proposals create conflict in Geraldton

Caravan Industry Association at odds with report



PETER POAT

A CONSULTANT'S report prepared for the City of Greater Geraldton expresses concern the mid-coast city may be missing out on more than \$9 million in tourist spending annually due to RV travellers bypassing the town and the services it offers.

However, the Caravan Industry Association of WA has criticised the report.

A professional consultant prepared the report with the aim of opening up free short-term RV camping sites in an effort to arrest what it considers lost business to local traders.

Its conclusions reveal capturing just those visitors who currently bypass the city could realistically increase Geraldton's total overnight stays by 50 per cent or more, boosting the local economy by an estimated \$9,454,000 a year.

The report says this figure rises to more than \$15 million when including economic modelling done by REMPLAN, which suggests an additional potential \$3.7 million in industrial flow-on effects, plus \$1.6 million from value-added services and \$860,000 in salaries and wages could benefit the city.

The report says Geraldton compares poorly with other WA centres. To arrest this, the proposal recommends the city identify RV travellers' needs and provide cost-effective services and facilities.

The report was open for public comment for five months and suggests the Campervan and

Motorhome Club of Australia's RV-friendly towns initiative could be strategically integrated with the city's Tourism Strategy and the Mid-West Development Commission's Tourism and Recreational Vehicle strategies.

Some of the main facets of this are to create low-cost/no-cost short-stay locations, free dump points, potable water and a greywater disposal areas, hubs for all RV requirements with a comprehensive availability for all RV-related products and services, secure parking near the visitor information centre, beaches, and city centre for all sizes and shapes of RVs, preparation of an attractions and activities guide specifically for RV travellers, and free wi-fi at 10 locations around the city.

Another objective is to encourage those who already visit Geraldton to stay for longer periods and give them compelling reasons to extend their stay.

There are more than 200 CMCA-endorsed RV Friendly towns in Australia, with 28 in WA.

Several sites were identified in Geraldton for no cost, short-stay (72 hours) stopovers and Pages Beach was proposed for an initial 90-day trial to identify and resolve any issues.

The delivery of more and better services is expected to generate an improvement in positive reputation spread by word of mouth and social media, which will drive additional RV traffic to Geraldton.

This line of free promotion cannot be underestimated as the RV population are big users of social media and a plethora of dedicated RV traveller websites.

This medium can also do devastating damage, with bloggers criticising the unacceptable aspects of towns and facilities.

The report included a small sample of random interviews with caravaners around Geraldton which indicated travellers generally perceived WA as less RV-friendly than other States.

However, a submission to council from the Caravan Industry Association of WA, which has a policy of opposition to the CMCA friendly RV town concept and is the peak industry body representing caravan parks, challenged most assumptions in the report. It claims there are numerous inaccuracies and qualified industry-specific research and information was not used.

Furthermore, it claims full details on product were not supplied and there has been no input or consultation with local caravan parks or CIAWA.

It said the commercial caravan

park operators in the City of Greater Geraldton supported the endeavours to provide easier access to facilities and services, improved signage and the like for travellers with larger vehicles but vehemently opposed any free or low-cost camping.

It further states that aside from a very small and vocal market segment whose desire is to not pay their way, consumer demands are currently being met by the existing commercial operators.

A City of Greater Geraldton Council spokesman said submissions were being considered and it was expected an outcome would be adopted before Christmas.



A sign at the entry to one of WA's 28 designated CMCA RV friendly towns.
Picture: Peter Poat



Parks lobby for new RV sites

Jasmine Bamford

The battle for tourism profits in the Goldfields is hotting up, with two major accommodation providers joining forces to offer cheaper rates and lobbying local governments to re-evaluate the placement of recreational vehicle-friendly sites.

Acclaim Holiday Parks chief executive Sally Chacko presented her case to the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder at an all-purpose council meeting on Monday night before travelling to Norseman on Tuesday for a Shire of Dundas meeting.

In a bid to compete with the RV-free site on Great Eastern Highway, which is 600m from one of its van parks, Acclaim has vowed to offer cheaper rates for self-contained RVs at its two Kalgoorlie premises for two years.

Ms Chacko has also enlisted Discovery Parks chief executive Grant Wilckens to join the fight, who has promised a reciprocal deal at Discovery's two sites in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. In return for their pricing initiative, the two accom-

modation heavyweights want local governments in the Goldfields-Esperance region to reconsider the placement of RV sites, which are free for tourists.

Ms Chacko said she was most disappointed with what she perceived to be a lack of communication between caravan park owners and local governments.

"One of the biggest problems I have encountered is that council officers have been reluctant to engage in consultation with the local caravan parks ... perhaps because they anticipate a defensive, negative reaction," she said.

"I do not believe shires should be using ratepayers' money and community facilities such as sports ovals and parks to set up and maintain this type of facility in towns that have commercial caravan parks."

CKB councillor Mick McKay is to raise a motion with notice at Monday's ordinary council meeting to relocate Kalgoorlie's RV-friendly site to a destination suitable to appease the caravan park providers.

A City officer has provided comment on the motion, saying it was not clear what the financial impact has been on park operators since introducing the RV-friendly site.

"It is considered that the economic downturn in the city would have a far greater impact on the occupancy rate at caravan parks compared to the usage at Centennial Park," the officer said.

I do not believe Shires should be using ratepayers' money and community facilities ... in towns that have commercial caravan parks.

Sally Chacko



We're getting RV friendly

KENDALL and Wauchope are continuing on the road to become the region's first RV friendly towns.

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council gave the thumbs-up to working with the Kendall and Wauchope communities to obtain RV friendly status through the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia.

Council's acting director commercial services and industry engagement Rebecca Olsen said the council had worked with community stakeholders in Wauchope and

Kendall to further assess what was needed to support RV friendly accreditation.

"We know that towns such as Wauchope and Kendall are already engaging positively with RV travellers and many use the facilities our showgrounds currently have on offer," Ms Olsen said.

"Achieving RV friendly town status will help promote our smaller destinations to this growing visitor segment."

RV friendly towns must meet a set of criteria.