



Not a campsite

But council may extend CBD van sites

By Libby Price

The future of camping in the Lake Benalla Foreshore Reserve will be considered at tonight's council meeting, with confirmation on the council agenda that overnight camping on the reserve is prohibited under the current Community Local Law and Reserve Regulations.

Opposition to camping among the trees in front of the Sir Edward Weary Dunlop Learning

Centre, the skate park and the Senior Citizens Centre is growing, with numerous complaints to council and *The Ensign*.

While the report notes that signage that RV camping on the foreshore is prohibited could be erected within two weeks, it also suggests council consider, "positioning Benalla as an RV

Friendly Town under a scheme administrated by the Campervan and Motorhome club of Australia," and that, "further investigation be undertaken on the viability of RV Friendly Camping sites being established at: Lake Benalla Foreshore — Jaycee Island Car Park, Botanical Gardens Tennis

Courts Car Park and the Benalla Show Grounds."

Benalla Rural City chief executive officer Tony McIlroy confirmed to *The Ensign* that there was no free camping in the Benalla urban area.

"The current overnight camping on the Lake Benalla Foreshore is not permitted under the Community Local Law," Mr McIlroy said.

"The Local Law is under review and a determination will be made by council in relation to whether camping in the CBD will be

permitted and if so where."

Seasoned caravanner Bill Johns said he warned Benalla Rural City Council late last year that the free camping needed to be managed.

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Campers breaking law

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"We spend almost three or four months a year on the road, we subscribe to 'leave no trace'... We've seen this done before in other places, we've seen it done well, we've seen it done badly," Mr Johns said.

"I just thought it would be good to jump on this with the shire as quickly as possible, put them in the picture, explain to them what they should be doing and have it done really well from day one and we won't have the long-term problems that we've now got.

"I was concerned about the build up of people there and the issue with the fact that if they weren't 'leave no trace' specific vehicles, or vehicles with a grey tank and a black tank, and they drop any waste on the ground there, then the long-term environment effect will be something that us as ratepayers will have to clean up.

"Because people are putting food scraps down through their waste water out of their sinks, that will bring rats in and so on, and

I was just concerned and that in the long-term, it

would better if it was managed well."

Mr Johns said he had seen people camping in cars a long way from the public toilet.

"I'm pretty sure that if someone gets up at three o'clock in the morning and they want to have a leak and they're 100 metres down in the dark there, they're not going to walk that far," he said.

"Because the place doesn't have signage and it's not restricted and not being managed, it's open slather.

"The ranger should be able to just drop down there infrequently, unannounced and say, 'If you don't have a grey tank, you can't stay here, pack your stuff and leave.'

"It's great for the town, it brings in so much revenue. We spend 100, 200, 300 bucks... If the town does the right thing by you, you spend money in the town.

"I don't want to see the area destroyed and closed, everyone misses out, the town misses out on the



revenue, I don't want to see that happen, I want to see it regulated and run properly."

But not all local caravanners are as supportive.

Sandra and Robert Leng think allowing free camping on the lake foreshore is a blight on the landscape.

"It's a parkland, it's not a site for caravans," Mrs Leng said.

"There's Casey's Weir (on the Midland Hwy), there's designated places.

"We've been travelling just about all over Australia.

"Not once have we ever seen in the centre of town, where caravans are allowed to park.

"When I went in and complained at the council offices they said, 'oh they only stay one night and move on,' well that's not true.

"There's one caravan that was there for at least two weeks.

"Most of them stay two, three nights.

"There were 20 there one night. If they're not careful they'll have 200 there."

"We've stayed in a free spot at Longreach and there would have been 200 caravans there," Mr Leng said.

"They're not looking to spend money, they're looking for something cheap aren't they," Mrs Leng said.

"It's a myth that they spend a lot of money," Mr Leng said.

"Most of them are retired people.

"That's the reason why they stay there, because it's free.

"If they wanted to spend money they'd stay at the caravan park."

"If they wanted to spend money they'd stay at the caravan park."

● **Anyone wanting to speak**

at the council meeting needs to submit a Request to Speak at a Committee Meeting form by 10 am this morning. The form is available on the council website.



It's a park not a campsite: Caravanners Sandra and Robert Leng think the motorhomes are a blight on the landscape.



Chamber of Commerce active in Oakey

The Oakey Chamber of Commerce discussed the RV Friendly strategy, the upcoming Queensland Heritage Rally in Oakey and heard thoughts from locals on various issues at its last meeting before the approaching May 17 AGM, on Tuesday April 12.

Council's Tourism Development Officer, Rhiannon Priestly, presented an overview of the newly adopted Tourism and Events Strategy and the Recreational Vehicle Strategy.

With the numbers of self-contained caravans fitted with battery packs, solar panels, generators and ensuite bathrooms increasing, it has become necessary for council to ensure that rules and regulations are put in place at free camping areas to offer consistency in signage and stay durations and to document amenities available to the tourist at each site.

"This sector of tourism is largely untapped and council are working tirelessly on plans to improve the situation and to capture the tourism dollar spent at local retail outlets," said Rhiannon.

Oakey has a dump point located in York Street that forms part of the RV Friendly Town.

New managers of the Oakridge Motel & Caravan Park were in attendance at the Chamber meeting finding the information and presentation by Rhiannon as a positive step as long as council consider the effects

that any changes would have on existing businesses such as caravan parks.

The Toowoomba & District Old Machinery Society (TADOMS) were also in attendance to encourage awareness of its major Queensland Heritage Rally being held at the Oakey

Showgrounds in October this year.

"This will be one of the best events that Oakey has seen before," Jeanette Kummerow said.

"We chose Oakey and not Toowoomba because we hold our annual Expo at the Oakey Showgrounds and we get an excellent crowd each time and we enjoy being in Oakey."

Mrs Kummerow asked the Chamber for support and to help the TADOMS committee get the message out to the people around this area.

"The advertising campaign and the distribution of brochures has been an ongoing job and the more help we can get the better."

The Chamber will meet and discuss ways to promote the event at low cost and this may include a Treasure Hunt for an old machinery part, such as a piston, located in Oakey through hints published weekly in *The Oakey Champion*.

A prize and the mythology are yet to be determined.

"Maybe the piston polished and mounted as the prize" suggested Oakey Chamber President, Les Jasper.

Mr David Von Hoff, a Dairy Farmer from Brymaroo attended the meeting, presenting an overview of his thoughts about the demise of the dairy industry and climate change and his thoughts about Acland Stage 3.

The Chamber were invited to his property as guests to come along and view his property.

The Chamber will follow

up on David's invitation.

The Chamber agrees that the dairy industry is in tatters in Queensland and the problems associated with the

industry are coming from many fronts.

The chances of the Chamber operating out of the Oakey Railway station has taken a back flip as complications arise from applying for a lease of the building for the purpose of establishing a tourist information centre.

At this point the cost of setting up the lease, modifying the building and the associated rent are beyond the Chamber's ability to service it.

Negotiations with Queensland Rail are ongoing.

Other projects that are still being actioned by the Chamber include securing a static military helicopter display for Oakey and the Oakey Art Plan.

The Oakey Chamber of Commerce meets on the third Wednesday of the month at the Oakey RSL at 5.30pm.

For more information visit the 'Oakey Chamber of Commerce & Industry,' Facebook page.



Oakey Chamber of Commerce has shown their support for TADOMS (Toowoomba and District Old Machinery Society) in the lead up to the Queensland Heritage Rally to be held in Oakey on the last weekend in October. Seated from TADOMS are Bob Buckley, Allan Boardman, Barry Tigell and Jeanette Kummerow.