



RVs still a hot topic at council

FREE parking for Recreational Vehicles (RVs) is still a hot topic for Kingston District Council.

The issue was again in the spotlight at the April monthly meeting after the Caravan Parks Association of SA wrote to the council.

It released a document aimed at minimising the development of what it describes as non-compliant camping areas in towns where caravan parks already provide facilities for travellers.

Before council discussed the report, Kingston Caravan Park owner Kevin Pascoe addressed the meeting.

Mr Pascoe told council he had no objection to free parks, as long as they were large self-contained RVs with all sources including black water, grey water and were able to dispose of waste products correctly.

“What has happened is that, magazines are published around Australia for all overseas tourists to look at and it has Kingston as a free park,” he said.

“Not a RV free park, but a free park which means that any bongo van, any tent or any other person who is not RV friendly is allowed to park in this

town’s park.”

Mr Pascoe said he understood council was unable to police the free

park all day and night, but he wanted to know what happened to the waste product, who paid for it and where they put their grey water.

“The problem is of course that the council hasn’t got enough money to put anyone out there,” Mr Pascoe said.

“Other councils are putting a charge on their parks.”

Mr Pascoe told council he knew many people have congratulated them on their free park, and that he had been told those people spend up when in Kingston - a comment he disagreed with.

“I spend a lot of money in this town, my employees are all local and spend their money in the town,” he said.

“Park maintenance is sourced from the town.

“The point I am trying to make here is that the people who use the RV park don’t spend the money in this town.”

Mr Pascoe told council those non-compliant vehicles which stop in the town, stay here for free at ratepayers’ expense.

Mr Pascoe told council one of the most popular

RV magazines praises Kingston as the number one town for their particular operation.

He said the article states “even though the sign says 24-hours, most people stay longer - it is not policed”.

“What does this create for the town,” Mr Pascoe asked.

Mr Pascoe thanked council for listening to his concerns and asked that they take into account what he has achieved over the last seven years with the caravan park.

Mayor Evan Flint told council it was now up to them to discuss the issue, and there was no easy answer.

Cr Chris England said: “If information is being printed that isn’t right then perhaps we should write to them and ask them to change it.

“We should try and correct it.”

CEO Nick Brown told council he went past the park every day after work and asked people to move on.

“We do have limited resources to police it,” he said.

“One of the biggest issues is that we can ask them to move out, but they can just drive 50m and park legally.”

Cr Sid Frankling said: “We created the free sites

to move them off the foreshore.”

Mayor Flint added that council had discussed the issue before and nothing really changes.

“Unless someone wants to move something,” he

said. “We developed this idea because of the previous problem.

“We’ve been too successful (with the free park).”

Cr England moved that council attempt to monitor all camping publications to ensure the correct information is published and that the Maria Creek 24 hour park is monitored more closely.

This motion was seconded by Cr Darryl Morley.

Cr England added: “The problem is, the fact we got it, and it’s good and it’s free.”

“Information is around the country that Kingston has a good free park, and everyone is coming here.

“If we didn’t have such a good one, we wouldn’t have it there - we can’t have it both ways.”



Free camping for travellers

SAM NORRIS

Tables, chairs and bins from the Heritage Mall could find new life at a free overnight camp for motorhomes.

The old furniture will be removed when work starts on The Levee project next month.

"It's potentially a good reuse of this furniture," deputy mayor Cr Steve Procter said.

"Just to recognise the city as RV [recreation vehicle] friendly would be a boon for tourism."

The Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia, which creates maps and reviews of tourist hot spots, has been in talks with Maitland City Council since 2012 to build a campsite and enable travellers to stay free of charge for up to 72 hours.

There are no vacancies at Maitland's existing two caravan parks, which are full with permanent residences, and a third commercial park near Telarah is still in the planning stages.

"I believe there is a real need for that [third tourist park] and I don't see [the campsite] operating in opposition to that," Cr Procter said.

"The demand was probably proven by the illegal camping at Groovin the Moo." Campers in town for the music festival were asked to help clean up some of the mess generated as a result of the overwhelming numbers.

"We've got to work out if tents will be allowed," Cr Procter said.

"The problem with tents is that they're not self-sufficient for water and showers."

The Caravan and Motorhome club will provide the effluent dump point for free, which Cr Procter said council planned to install at

Harold Gregson Reserve near No.1 Sportsground.

The proposed location is adjacent to the existing amenities block linked to High Street via an existing footpath.

"It's not a big job, we just need to put in a table, some chairs and bins," Cr Procter said.

"It's within walking distance to tourist information centre, cafes and all the facilities of High Street."

The existing footpath has been earmarked for an upgrade to make it 1.5 metres wide, the new state government standard for paths that cyclists and pedestrians share.

Cr Procter said the site and its access off High Street met traffic standards and would enable council to build the campsite in a cost efficient way.

"Because there isn't money for it we're using funds that are already allocated [in the area] to get a better bang for our buck," he said.

"Because there is no [formal] project, we're doing it as we go along [and] I hope to see people staying there later this year."

Council resolved to reuse the mall furniture where appropriate across the city earlier this year.



**WHAT THE
MERCURY SAYS:
SEE EDITORIAL PAGE 8**



CAMPSITE: Cr Steve Procter at the proposed campsite.

Picture by PERRY DUFFIN



Growers left sour over Government's decision to drop new ships plan

Strait freight food fight



**HELEN
KEMPTON**

TASMANIAN fruit growers say their freight needs are being ignored, with the decision to refurbish instead of replace TT-Line ferries.

Growers say it overlooks the needs of Tasmania's expanding agricultural sector.

The State Government this week announced it would spend \$10 million refurbishing TT-Line ferries instead of securing two new freight-only ships, which would help growers get perishable goods to interstate and overseas customers.

It also would have created room on Spirit of Tasmania vessels for more cars and caravans.

Fruit Growers Tasmania will meet ask Infrastructure Minister Rene Hidding and ask the Government to reverse the decision.

Business development manager Phil Pyke said industry was angry its pre-election lobbying had been dismissed without a freight alternative being put forward.

The Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia, which represents the growing "grey nomad" market, was also disappointed with the plan.

Club director Ken Kipping said the Government was "shooting itself in the foot" over plans to boost visitor numbers to Tasmania.

He said refurbishing the ferry would not address prob-

lems of inadequate space and the high cost of taking a caravan on the Spirit of Tasmania.

TT-Line holds 20 per cent

of the Bass Strait freight market and the Government has promised the company's freight capacity would not decrease under the refurbishment plans. But Premier Will Hodgman said allowing TT-Line to focus on tourism would give private freight operators like Toll and Searoad the opportunity to fill any sea transport void.

Reid Fruit marketing and business manager Lucy Gregg said tourism and agriculture were two of the state's major economic drivers and both needed to be given the tools to grow.

"Increasing the freight capacity of the vessels is critical, particularly in the peak harvest season which coincides with the peak tourist season," Ms Gregg said.

TT-Line is seen as the best option for producers of perishable goods because fruit can be picked, packed, arrive in Melbourne and be loaded on to planes within 48 hours.

But Ms Gregg said some perishable produce had been off-loaded last season because of a shortage of space.

"It is appropriate that the tourism market be encouraged, but both tourism and agriculture need to be catered for. We don't want to see an 'us and them' scenario develop."



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BRIEF CMCA-AUST INDEX 1.3



ROTTEN DEAL: Hansens operations manager Grant Newbon with crates of apples bound for the mainland.

Picture: LEIGH WINBURN



Travellers welcome free site

SAM NORRIS

Plans for a free overnight campsite in central Maitland have met widespread support and are not expected to detract from commercial operations.

The issue ignited enthusiasm on the *Mercury* website yesterday when Cr Steve Procter revealed the city could open the campsite this year.

The city's two caravan parks offered limited vacancies and the proponents of two more commercial facilities felt the free campsite would encourage tourism.

Maitland Showground has recently upgraded its camping facilities with power and water, but few travellers know about the cost-effective option.

"We're very much in favour of council presenting Maitland as an RV [recreational vehicle] friendly city and we feel part of that," Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association treasurer David Perrott said.

"We see it as a revenue stream and any money we get helps maintain and improve the facilities."

The association charges \$22 a night for one of its 32 powered sites or \$110 a week.

"A lot of places are charging that sort of money [\$22] per person," Mr Perrott said.

"It's an area that we really haven't pushed and we want to make it known that camping is available here."

Bob Parsons has had discussions with council to open a tourist park at Mount

Dee near Telarah.

"The competition is not an issue and council is not trying to do me out of business," he said.

"Anything that brings people to town and gives them options is helpful."

Mr Parsons's park would cater for people who wished to stay longer than the 72-hours maximum proposed for the free campsite and would offer full amenities and recreational facilities.

"It's been a long and frustrating process, but I'm hopeful we will move forward in the near future," Mr Parsons said.

"We're aiming at joining one of the top two tourist park associations which set high standards and we will have to comply with those requirements."

WHAT YOU SAID:

Good move Maitland. This will bring more people into your town that otherwise, like us, just drive through. Add the necessary dump point, and a fresh water fill point and you will have provided the Trifecta modern travellers need. Thank you for your consideration.

– BUSHCARAVANNER

It's about time Maitland is starting to look ahead. I think it is a fantastic idea.

– TRAVELLER

After travelling around Tassie where it seems every town has a dump point, regardless of whether they had a free camp, I can't believe it's taken so long for Maitland to catch on. Perhaps it should have been done before the Hunter Expressway opened, it will have to be promoted very well to encourage drivers to exit the Expressway now.

– TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

More comments on page 8



your say

Free camping for travellers

Good decision Maitland. RV friendly is the way to go.

TONY

There are no funds for it – how will it be maintained?

JEFF

I will certainly stay there and shop there if this happens. But do ask travellers to take their rubbish with them. And think about installing \$2 showers.

DAME MARGARET

Congratulations – commonsense thinking and action to attract more visitors with accompanying spending at the local businesses. May many more councils/councillors show such an enlightened approach to the needs of the consumer (RVers) – not the blinkered-thinking by many that the only place an RV can “park” overnight is in a caravan cabin park! It will be popular when in full operation and it would be interesting to see the statistics of RV spending.

MITCHQ19171

Brilliant, sensible, forward thinking, groundbreaking decision. Well done council management and staff, and CMCA (Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia) actively and positively pursuing sensible freedom of camping choice instead of just whinging about it.

JOHN HORSLEY

What a top idea. This is the sort of action that puts Maitland well ahead of the rest of the Hunter. But no bins please as they just attract rubbish.

BIGFELLER