



# Council looks to regulate free sites

By **BEN HANSEN**

CARAVANS and campers will soon be more welcome in Waratah-Wynyard with the council saying they want to take advantage of those wanting to camp in the region.

Waratah-Wynyard general manager Michael Stretton said the council wanted to encourage freedom campers - campers who prefer not to use caravan parks - into the municipality.

However to do this, new regulation power would need to be granted to the council.

Mr Stretton said the council wanted to review current arrangements with freedom campers so there would be increased flexibility around camping in the municipality.

Rather than having free

reign on the region, Mr Stretton said council needed to have some control on where campers could stay.

"We need to set aside areas for freedom campers so it doesn't impinge on everyone else's use of a public area," he said.

In order to do this, Mr Stretton said the council would be developing a regulatory method.

This involves developing a bylaw allowing the council to regulate freedom camping, something the council currently could not do.

"Unless you have a bylaw which regulates where campers can go, it's pretty hard to regulate, you can suggest the campers can go to certain spots, but you can't control it," Mr Stretton said.

Council now has a draft bylaw under review by council staff and councillors.

"We'll bring that to council in the next couple of months, it will go through council and then to state government for review."

However, Mr Stretton recognised this would need to be done in a way that wouldn't put local caravan parks at a disadvantage.

"It's about managing the negatives that come with that, it's detrimental to caravan parks, although freedom campers may not use caravan parks anyway," he said.



# Overnight parking rejected by council

A PETITION with 264 signatures requesting Central Coast Council reinstate overnight parking at Penguin's Lions Park was rejected on Monday night.

In September last year the council passed a motion that signage be erected at the Penguin site to disallow overnight stays of motorhomes.

However, the motion said motorhome owners were able to stay for up to 48 hours in any of the rest areas within the municipal area.

Council has highlighted the number of overnight stays in the Penguin and Sulphur Creek areas had increased after the closure of Lions Park.

In a report council said there was an average of 32 vans overnighing between

Hall Point, Preservation Bay, Midway Point and Lions Park in December 2013, while in December 2014 there were about 35 vans in the same areas. These numbers increased in the same areas to 38 vans in January 2014, 47 vans in January 2015 and 50 vans in February 2015.

Councillors at Central Coast Council's meeting said caravans parking in and around the Lions Park area created congestion and safety problems.

Councillor Gary Carpenter acknowledged the amount of signatures council received.

He said perhaps other areas of crown land "sitting there going to waste" could be used as an alternative.

"We have some many par-

cels of land sitting around that could be developed into areas that people could pull up and park and could stay over night," he said.

However Cr Carpenter said safety at Lions Park was a concern.

"We've really got to respect the fact that it's not safe for a huge amount of vehicles coming in and out and then allow for our people to try and get down alongside and park," he said.



**COUNCIL SAYS NO:** The Central Coast Council rejected a move to reinstate overnight parking at Penguin's Lions Park on Monday night.



## Encouraged to drive regions

MORE than 1400 members of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia have been encouraged to visit the State's regions.

Tourism Minister Leon Bignell said the club's 29th anniversary rally was an excellent opportunity to highlight the accessibility of SA's stunning, natural attributes.

"The State Government has developed five touring routes across multiple regions, highlighting our world class food and wine, scenery and wildlife," he said.

"These touring routes make SA more accessible - and make planning a road trip easier - as they highlight must-do experiences in an easy to follow format."

The five routes are:

- Epicurean Way - McLaren Vale to Clare Valley via the Adelaide Hills and Barossa
- Explorers Way - Adelaide to Darwin via the Flinders Ranges and Coober Pedy
- Seafood Frontier - Adelaide to Eyre Peninsula via Yorke Peninsula
- Mighty Murray Way - the Murray River from Renmark to the Mouth
- Southern Ocean Drive - Mount Gambier to Adelaide via Kangaroo

Island

"The club's members are important to SA tourism and we hope their time here will inspire more self-drive holidays for the group," Mr Bignell.

About 80 per cent of the four million domestic overnight leisure trips in SA last year involved visitors using private, rented, hire vehicles, campervans and motorhomes.

"The self-drive holiday market is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors," Mr Bignell said.

"Promoting these routes puts us in a great position to attract interstate and overseas visitors."

The rally will be located at the Lutheran Unity College Primary and Secondary Campus on the banks of the Murray River, Murray Bridge, with an open day held for the public on April 25.

Tours of the Murray region as well as other SA regions are on offer for CMCA members to participate in before, during and after the rally.

For more information on touring routes visit [www.southaustralia.com](http://www.southaustralia.com)



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# Call to encourage more tourists

By **JOSH DEL PINO**

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A LOCAL resident has called on Collie authorities to step up its tourism development to be more welcoming to visitors.

The Shire of Beverley is currently considering submitting an assessment to become recognised as an RV Friendly Town.

To obtain such status, a town must meet certain criteria including providing dedicated parking near shops, low-cost short term recreational vehicle (RV) parking for self contained vehicles close to the central business district, access to water and a free dump point.

The certification is approved by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia.

Frequent traveller Brian Hann said towns in the eastern states had already jumped on board with great success.

He suggested there were plenty of viable location around town such as Wallsend Ground and east end of Venn Street.

"We have travelled around the country for the past 10 years," he said.

"There is an obvious need in Collie for low-cost accommodation in Collie.

"WA is well behind.

"Over east there are far more towns that are RV-friendly.

"They have realised the more people stay close to town, the more money flows into local businesses.

Mr Hann said free or cheap accommodation spread goodwill and would encourage more tourists to visit Collie.

"Travellers talk," he said.

"Collie does not have the greatest reputation for being tourist friendly.

"Many travellers are self-sufficient and only want somewhere to park their RV for the night.

"Many retirees can't afford to pay the cost to stay in a caravan park.

"Pensioners don't have much money, but what they save would be spent in town.

"As a local, I want people to leave Collie with a good feeling."

Collie Chamber of Commerce chief executive Richard Jackson said the town already had sufficient facilities.

"We already looking into ways that can make Collie more attractive to tourists and for RV users," he said.

"The town always needs fresh investment and ideas when it comes to tourism.

"We have received feedback from businesses who are already looking at expanding and improving hotels, motels and cafes to suit the tourism market."

Collie River Valley Tourist Park manager Patrick Honeywill felt more RV space was unnecessary.

"People who stay at the caravan park will stay longer," he said.

"We provide all the facilities a traveller might need.

"The park is RV-friendly."

Mr Honeywill rejected the notion the short-term parking bays would benefit the local economy.

"If we provide free overnight spots for people to stay all that will happen is people will use the place as a dumping ground as they pass through the town," he said.

"We want people to stay longer at the caravan park and use it as a base to explore the South West."

Neighbouring Wagin is already an RV Friendly Town and has been for five years.

Shire of Wagin community and regulatory services manager Carolyn Webster said feedback since becoming an RV Friendly Town had been positive.

"There is an expectation that they get a discount at the local caravan park and be allowed to have a one-night free stop anywhere they

choose," she said.

"We get continuous letters and verbal reports from RV users visiting Wagin. All to my knowledge have been complimentary.

"Our main RV area is on grass in the showgrounds and users pay extra if they need to access power but most of the vehicles are independent and use solar.

"We would hope that they of course shop local but unlike Collie we don't have a Coles or Woolworths and suspect these vans stock up in the large towns, like Collie, and then only top up with minor shopping in towns like ours."

**□ What do you think? Are Collie's tourism facilities adequate or should more be done? Send an email to [josh.delpino@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:josh.delpino@fairfaxmedia.com.au).**



**Stay awhile:** Brian Hann would like to see Collie become an RV Friendly Town.



# Free camping frees the mind



**SIMON  
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THAT'S LIFE

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**T**HE risk/reward equation is a useful way to work out things. You weigh up the cost/benefit, and then, regardless of common sense, you go for it.

That's the thinking we applied recently when relocating a campervan from Cairns to Sydney – a distance of some 30 gazillion kilometres.

We figured the risk if we didn't drive back was that we'd never get to know just how big this country is and how numb a bum could get.

The reward was we got to kid ourselves we saved money on accommodation while spending cash on petrol, two-minute noodles and bum-relieving beverages.

We'd been up in North Queensland to visit our daughter who has moved up there to study. We'd applied risk/reward thinking to that too.

The risk was she'd set aside at least five minutes aside to enjoy our company. But we correctly calculated that may be stretching it, parents being inconvenient and all, unless they take you out for dinner.

So we flew up under the crafty guise of doing something for our wedding anniversary and stayed in four-star hotels for a week to ease our pain, without her.

The risk if we didn't do that was we'd never understand how expensive it was going to be visiting our daughter in North Queensland over the next six years, unless we won Lotto.

The reward was we became accustomed, mentally and physically, to king-size beds, humidity-defying airconditioning and buffet breakfasts.

To counteract that, we drove back, in a campervan complete with a dodgy rear vision mirror that eventually fell off near Port Macquarie, and no cutlery.

Now, if such romance appeals, you can either get your B-double licence, or visit websites that advertise campervans and cars that rental companies need relocating.

Typically they'll list the types of vehicles available and a window of time in which

they want the thing moved. Usually you get free rental, or free petrol or free insurance or sometimes all of the above.

To our dismay, the cruise ship Rhapsody Of The Seas, berthed at Cairns the same time we were up there, was not on the list.

We instead secured a four-berth campervan that not only needed to be returned from Cairns to Sydney in eight days, but could have done with a lick of Glen 20.

Five of those eight days were spent driving and in retrospect we probably could have done it quicker swimming, if only you could swim in North Queensland without being killed by stingrays or crocs.

Of course, if we had swum we'd have risked depriving ourselves the chance to do what every grey nomad and backpacker does, and that's free camp.

Free camping is where you pull up by the side of road and camp, not unlike a homeless person, for free.

Grey nomads have been doing it for years and counter-act the perception they are homeless by dragging caravans the size of their actual homes behind them.

Or at least caravans that cost as much as their actual homes, somewhat negating the concept of "free-ness". It is amazing the scale out there on the road. Or at least beside it.

Queensland is quite tolerant of free

camping, unlike NSW, which will set up a petition the minute you pull up to run you out of town.

Ideally you want at least drinking water and showers in your free camp site, and not too many Ivan Milats. A hotel nearby is a bonus.

There is a network of sites around Australia which travellers can tap into.

If you have any trouble, check with family members who have retired recently. Chances are they'll have gone Bedouin and know lots of good spots.

But my advice would be to not wait until you retire because free camping frees your

mind and the sooner you do that the better.

Free camping provides opportunities to set up at sunset and contemplate the difference between sleeping next to a swamp as opposed to a wetland. Answer: None.

It provides the opportunity to contemplate whether you brought any insect repellent. Answer: Hopefully.

And it provides the opportunity to contemplate how memorial parks in small country towns are not only where people "up on their luck" sleep for the night, but also people down on their luck.

Now this type of mobile adventure may sound unrewarding to some but the risks of hard work in modern campervans aren't



much once you work out which switches flatten the battery and which don't.

Living on the edge, like hard work, is reward in itself, particularly when it's the edge of a mattress which used to be the back seat of your van.

It's true, driving long distances can be a little mind, and bum, numbing. But if you didn't give it a try you'd risk not getting to wave to people driving campervans from the same rental company in the opposite direction. Most survive the distraction.

You'd also risk not listening to so many previously unheard of Queensland country radio stations. I now understand why Maroons supporters are so parochial and also why so many Queensland country radio stations are best left unheard.

All in all, I found the experience rewarding, and an offer to do it all again tomorrow would be music to my ears, no risk about that.

**We figured the risk if we didn't drive back was that we'd never get to know just how big this country is and how numb a bum could get.**



**BLOG WITH SIMON WALKER**

[theherald.com.au](http://theherald.com.au)



# Accreditation, the key to a great holiday experience

## SIMON GLOSSOP

SO you're planning a road trip. How do you decide where to stay, or what brands or products to buy, or even who to buy them from?

Making a bad decision on just one of these can leave a sour taste from your holiday and have a negative impact for everyone involved.

Accreditation has been around a long time with the WA tourism industry being a leader around the country in achieving accreditation with almost 1000 tourism businesses undertaking the rigorous operating requirements needed to be approved for the accreditation program operated by Tourism Council WA, Trust the Tick.

WA caravan parks, service repairers, dealers and manufacturers are strong supporters of accreditation compliance.

As a consumer you can feel confident that an accredited business has been audited to ensure it has all the requirements to ensure you have the best experience and Caravan Industry Association WA strongly supports accreditation and the Tourism Tick.

As the state based organisation promoting the caravan and camping industry in WA, the Caravan Industry Association WA is working with the national industry body, Caravan Industry Association of Australia, who are leading the way in the sector developing a specific caravan and camping

whole of industry accreditation and compliance program.

This caravan industry specific accreditation is called Caravan Key and the logo means that a caravan and camping associated business meets the high standards of accreditation required to use the logo

The program will provide surety in the quality of service and product with a commitment to higher

standards that is designed to give you peace of mind that the business you are dealing with complies to all government regulations, safety and operating requirements.

Accreditation represents a commitment to providing the best customer service and products that represent superior quality.

To become accredited a business agrees to external examination of their processes and procedures with a view to matching and exceeding established standards.

Businesses that carry the Caravan Key represent

service providers and manufacturers who have a dedication to continued learning and improvement. **RVs**

One part of the program is the Recreational Vehicle Manufacturing Accreditation Program (RVMAP), designed to help consumers to be confident when they buy an RV adorned with the RVMAP Accreditation Key.

"The Australian design

rules for the construction of RVs for Australian conditions are some of the toughest in the world, and it's important that products being supplied to the market meet these standards," Caravan Industry

Association of Australia CEO, Stuart Lamont, said.

"With deregulation of the Government's agenda, it is important that consumers purchasing products in our industry are supplied with products that are fit for their intended purpose, and that are able to stand up to the rigours of the Australian landscape."

"It is important that consumers have an easily recognisable symbol giving them the confidence to be sure of their next RV purchase. The accreditation key will provide it."

## Caravan Parks

The accreditation caravan key has been provided to caravan parks under the caravan holiday park accreditation program run by Caravan Industry Association of Australia.

Accredited holiday parks are highly professional businesses that undergo strict quality assessment of holiday park operational management.

Travellers and holiday-makers can be assured that holiday parks who participate in an accreditation program possess a commitment to quality and will provide a trouble free, safe and secure experience during their stay.

"Caravanning remains an incredibly popular pastime



with 85% of the Australian population having gone caravanning or camping at one point in their lifetime,” Mr Lamont said.

There are plans to extend the accreditation caravan key out to other sectors of the industry over the coming year so that caravanning consumers can feel comfortable that they are dealing with reputable product and businesses which have been assessed through the industry-led accreditation program.

Holiday makers are strongly encouraged to look out for the Caravan Accreditation Key and the Trust the Tick logo used by Tourism Council WA, the use of these logos means a business is committed to providing the highest standard experience for consumers.



Using accredited caravan parks ensures the best possible holiday experience.