



>> Campaspe Shire briefs

Proposed RV park on agenda

A proposed recreational vehicle park in Echuca should be refused planning permission because it poses a danger to life from fast-rising flood waters, according to a Campaspe Shire planning report.

The park was on Council's agenda at its monthly meeting yesterday, with a report stating the site is inappropriate, even though the recreational vehicles are easily moved.

The Anstruther St site fronting the Campaspe River is prone to flooding, with water across parts of the site reaching a depth of 1.85 metres, with a flood velocity rate of 2.2 metres a second.

"If the Murray River is high and a high rainfall event is experienced within the catchment of the Campaspe, the river can rise at a rapid rate, which minimises the opportunity to provide sufficient warnings," the planning report states.

"Tourists using the RV Park (including overseas visitors) may not be aware of the localised conditions.

"Given the proximity of the site to the Campaspe River, it is considered that this is an inappropriate use which will result in a risk to life, property and the environment."

The report said while access could be prevented in a time of flood, the number of people and vehicles that could be on-site when a flood occurs would provide an added burden to emergency services.

The site has a long history of failed applications for development and the initial application for a park housing 15 recreational vehicles received 17 objections.

Those objections stood when the application was amended and resubmitted to

the council, and a further nine objections were received for the new application.

The development site is at the end of a residential street and objections focused on flooding, noise and light, traffic on the site, parking, and the environmental impacts on the bushland setting.

— Darren Linton

Paddlesteamer funding

Other items on yesterday's council meeting agenda included a call for a further \$65 000 be allocated to the restoration of the PS Alexander Arbuthnot paddlesteamer in Echuca which would bring the total project budget to \$492 621.

Considered an "integral component of council's paddlesteamer fleet," council originally endorsed the project for \$141 600 in February 2014.

It was later identified that it would cost more than anticipated and a further \$285 900 was allocated to the project as part of the 2014-15 program budget, bringing the total funding available to \$427 621.

Shire officers have recommended council endorse the expanded scope of the project and allocate the funds immediately.

The officer's recommendation states "council's paddlesteamers are important heritage assets that directly contribute to the areas economy and community identity," and that "sufficient funds are available at this time in the asset renewal reserve and no other high priority demand has been identified at the time of writing this report."



TAMARAMA

Mysterious 'mayor' erects camping sign

AS the representatives of Waverley move to be swallowed up into an eastern suburbs supercouncil there is at least one member of the community calling for devolution.

Last month, the mysterious "Mayor of Tamarama" erected a sign along Marine Drive, near Tamarama Park, where residents have long complained about the influx of backpackers and their campervans.

The sign declared "No camping by order of the mayor Tamarama Council" and showed a man urinating on the ground.

Tamarama resident Alexander Haege told the *Courier* the sign was erected by a group known as Residents Agitating Tamarama Exit S.

The sign was later removed by council.

"He (the mayor of Tamarama) has determined that an identical sign will be re-erected," Mr Haege said.





LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Free camping debate

I WOULD like to comment on some of the statements made in the article "Park staff disappointed at moves on RV rules" as I believe it is important that readers know what the facts are in the constant freedom camping debate.

I run a website called www.free-choicecamps.com.au and an associated Facebook page, www.facebook.com/Freechoicecamping, and collect data and research from all over Australia.

Firstly, to quote the CEO of the Caravan and Camping Industry Association of Australia, the peak industry body in this country who says in numerous articles and press releases that the industry is experiencing an unprecedented boom period and has done for some time and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future.

All the research and studies published confirm his optimism.

While this is going on we see articles like this with caravan park proprietors lamenting their woes and accusing freedom campers and councils of "ruining" their business.

The industry's own published growth figures just don't endorse their "ruining" claims.

There are presently over 560,000 registered RVs in Australia and approximately 2700 caravan parks which raises the question that if towns like Kingston don't provide additional facilities for these wandering nomads, where are they going to go?

The simple answer is somewhere else, and then the business community, the whole business community, will find they are spending their dollars somewhere else also.

The RV tourism industry is estimated to be worth in excess of \$7 billion per year and towns that don't provide options for this tourism simply miss out on a large proportion of their share.

Now to this article, Mr Pascoe claims "We (the caravan park) pay council rates and rent to council and with the free parks becoming involved, that means that it's reduced our income."

We make the point that every other business also pays rates, don't they also

deserve the opportunity to have more tourists in town?

The expectation that if there were no fee to camp they would be in the caravan park is flawed. Research shows that 85 per cent of travellers use parks either full-time or part of the time while travelling, how much more market share do they demand?

Mr Pascoe also says "he was concerned, however, that residents are being 'led up the garden path' by council regarding the supposed benefits of overnight RV users".

Be assured the RV consumer is also concerned that communities are "led up the garden path" by many of the proven false claims made by the caravan park industry.

Mr Pascoe also says "The people who stay in the caravan park aren't just spending money in the pubs or fish and chip shop, they are spending money at the bakeries, supermarkets, petrol stations, clothes shops, the local hardware store and Kingston Electrical for example."

Is Mr Pascoe seriously suggesting that if I choose to park elsewhere I will not spend any money with others businesses beside the pubs and fish and chip shop?

I can assure him that on my last trip through SA I spent money in bakeries, supermarkets, petrol stations, clothing shops, hardware shops and even bought an electric heater.

I must say I loved this statement "I can understand the council wanting to attract more people, but are we attracting the right sort of people?"

Personally being one of the 85 per cent, if I choose to stay in his park while in Kingston does that make me the "right sort of people"?

I can assure the good people of Kingston that while freedom camping I have camped with many people, some doctors, pilots, highly successful business people, multi-millionaires, bank managers, engineers, nurses, labourers and pensioners, just to name a few.

Many might find his remark quite offensive.

Mr Pascoe says he can understand the council wanting to attract travellers and I

can understand Mr Pascoe wanting protectionism for his business but the world has moved on from the days of protectionism and we all have to compete in a competitive world.

Towns like Julia Creek in Queensland and Kulin in WA (just to name two) have thriving caravan parks and both have very popular freedom camps.

The consumer wants freedom of choice in their camping with everything from budget camping to five star parks.

No different to what is available in airlines, supermarkets, hotels, motels and many other industries.

I for one, on a recent trip to SA went out of my way to visit Kingston because of its reputation on the grey nomad grapevine for being friendly and providing options for the RV traveller.

I for one would hope that that reputation is not tarnished by the complaints of just one business, after all to keep things in perspective 2700 caravan parks in Australia, as important as they are, represent just .13 per cent of all small to medium businesses in Australia.

This story is already receiving considerable social media coverage and perhaps the local community should note what is being said <https://www.facebook.com/Freechoicecamping/posts/>

ARTHUR BUGDEN, Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia member.



Review of motorhome campsite to start soon

SAM NORRIS

Work could start on Maitland's first free campsite for motorhomes and caravans within weeks.

Maitland City Council has already set aside \$80,000 to complete the project this financial year but a start has been delayed slightly to improve on the plans.

"The works to Harold Gregson Reserve, including the installation of a recreational vehicle waste dump point, are currently being reviewed following the loss of trees in the area during the April storm to see if an improved outcome can be achieved," council infrastructure and design manager Kevin Stein said. "The review is a high priority and will be undertaken in the coming weeks."

Caravan holidaymaker Cr Steve Procter has led many discussions with council to establish such a site to bring Maitland a share of this valuable tourism industry.

The proposed site will include a waste dump point attached to the High Street public toilets as well as picnic tables and benches recycled from the old Heritage Mall.

Maitland committed funds to the project back in November.

Cessnock City Council announced this week \$30,000 for improvements at Kurri Kurri and Branxton free campsites.

Maitland's project revision are considered minor and won't need to go back to council.

"A complete construction schedule will be developed once the review has been finalised," Mr Stein said.



Mareeba Christmas in July

GREY nomads will be pouring into Mareeba to take part in the town's Tropical Christmas in July celebrations, to be held July 23-26.

The event, which is hosted by the Far North Nomads Chapter of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia and supported by Mareeba Shire Council, is in its 18th year, and offers visitors a variety of fun and interesting events.

Davies Park, Mareeba, will

be home to up to 250 motorhomes, which will converge from all over Australia for the annual event.

The profits of the event are donated to many local charities and organisations.

Over the four days, nomads will be able to enjoy a range of entertainment, raffles and special events, as well as live entertainment from local bands Now or Never and Kick Start.

On Saturday, the big Christmas in July dinner takes

place at Davies Park (catered by the Mareeba Leagues Club), followed by the open day on Sunday.

The day begins at 9am and goes until 3pm and features market stalls, raffles and various displays including motorhomes, campervans, and camping equipment.

"Mareeba has a great reputation with the travelling public and we welcome them with open arms," Mayor Tom Gilmore said.

"There will be a wide

variety of information stalls from local businesses and tourist destinations, and many of these amazing vehicles will be open for the public to see on the day.

"And it is a wonderful chance for locals to mingle with our visitors.

"Local multicultural dancers will entertain the crowd and there will be fun for the kids, a jumping castle, ice-creams and all sorts of food stalls."

The gold-coin donation entry fee will be divided between the Mareeba SES and the Mayor's Christmas Appeal.



In Brief

Lincoln now RV friendly

THE Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) this week officially declared Port Lincoln as a RV Friendly Town.

By promoting the partnership between recreational vehicle (RV) travellers and towns, CMCA aims to encourage the expansion of tourism related infrastructure and services, and also boost the economy of those towns providing amenities specifically for RV tourists.

In order to qualify for the program, towns must successfully meet the needs of RV travellers and satisfy stringent criteria including access to a general shopping area; provision of appropriate low cost overnight parking; and access to potable water and a free dump point.

CMCA also considers the general attitude of the local council and community, so as to truly identify the friendliest areas in Australia.



Macarthur says back free camping or lose

BY EVERARD HIMMELREICH

JOHN Bragg's message to Warrnambool is to accept freedom camping or miss out on economic benefits.

Mr Bragg, the president of the Macarthur Advancement and Development Association (MADA), has helped MADA develop a freedom camping area on the picturesque banks of the Eumeralla River at Macarthur.

The development of the area, where people can camp for free, led the Australian Campervan and Motorhome Club to recently declare Macarthur as a Recreational Vehicle Friendly Town.

The riverside area, which was formerly used by the Macarthur Angling club, has a large sheltered area and barbecue.

Mr Bragg said MADA decided about five years ago to support freedom camping after some of its members saw the beneficial impacts it had in other towns.

"The people that had it (freedom camping), the towns had progressed," he said.

Mr Bragg said several visitors used the Macarthur freedom camping area each week during the warmer months.

"They spend money at the pub and at the shop," he said.

Mr Bragg said he realised

Macarthur had a different perspective to Warrnambool about freedom camping because it did not have a caravan park but he believed both paid and freedom camping areas could co-exist.

He said he and his wife had used freedom camping areas when they travelled and enjoyed the "freedom of choice" they offered.

They travelled in a recreational vehicle that had its own power and ablution facilities and did not need

the swimming pools or children's playgrounds offered by caravan parks, Mr Bragg said.

MADA's efforts to attract visitors to Macarthur have extended not only to publicising the free camping area on the Eumeralla River but also to providing visitor facilities at the adjacent Macarthur Recreation Reserve for visitors who did not have power or toilet facilities in their vehicles.

Eight powered sites for visitors had been created as part of a project to provide three phase power to the recreation reserve and its sports facilities, Mr Bragg said.

The power upgrade was funded by Moyne Shire Council and energy company AGL.

Mr Bragg said visitors paid \$10 a night to MADA to use the powered sites.

A dump point where visitors can discharge stored sewerage from their vehicles has also been installed at the reserve.

MADA was also restoring an old toilet block at the reserve for visitors to use and was negotiating with the reserve's committee to try to give visitors access to showers, Mr Bragg said.



WELCOME: Macarthur Advancement and Development Association president John Bragg at Macarthur's freedom camping area.