



Show your support to make Dorrigo RV Friendly

A current project of the Dorrigo Chamber of Commerce is to apply for registration of Dorrigo as an RV Friendly town. We would like some feedback from local businesses as to their support of this project as without it the project won't get off the ground!

What do you think?

RV Friendly means that people driving self-contained motor homes or towing caravans would be welcome in Dorrigo, helping to promote Dorrigo as a tourist destination, bringing more visitors and therefore money into our local economy.

Let us know if you support this project by emailing the chambersecretary@dorrigo.com

The application process must go through Bellingen Shire Council first so the more support we have from local businesses and community members the better!



Concerns over RV park

Domanii Cameron

THE OPENING of Australia's first-ever RV-only park in Ingham has some tourism stakeholders concerned that local businesses are going to suffer.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's members only park was set to open last month, however has been pushed back due to final approvals from Hinchinbrook Shire Council.

Palm Tree Creek Caravan Park owner Belinda Stanes said she did not understand how Hinchinbrook Shire Council could approve such a venue.

"I really don't understand how council didn't think this was going to affect us," Mrs Stanes said.

"Why not have some consultation with the tourism businesses here, they can't keep doing this.

"Without consultation, how do we know about this stuff?"

Mrs Stanes said she didn't understand how the park would be regulated.

"How is it going to be regulated? Council isn't going to do anything when the RV's start rolling in, they'll just change the goalpost," she said.

"They're not going to kick someone out who's camping there.

"And the 'leave no trace' program, where does the rub-

bish go? Doesn't the ratepayer pay for that to be collected?"

Mrs Stanes said if Palm Tree Creek Caravan Park wasn't prepared to think outside the box, then closing down would have been a possibility.

"A lot of people are going to think Tyto is the same as

CMCA in terms of location so people are going to turn up to Tyto, be told that it's not CMCA and then sign up for it on the spot," she said.

"Everyone is swallowing this up without it being considered.

Caravan Parks Association of Queensland manager Kristy Ponting released a letter outline the company's concerns around the beginning of July.

"We submit that Queensland should not be in the business of discriminating against member types and vehicle types," Ms Ponting said.

"We struggle to understand why CMCA believe it is the federal, state and local governments' responsibility to increase their membership numbers?"

Ms Ponting said the targeted age bracket has not been defined sufficiently.

"They recognise in this paper that future growth and the key target market is the 35-49 year old market," she said. "This age bracket is the

family market, which are not represented in CMCA membership figures. The family market are a high yield market, who are the most active participant in the commercial caravan park sector."

CMCA spokesman Colin Balfour has assured Ingham caravan parks that their businesses won't be affected.

"They're not going to go broke," Mr Balfour said.

"This time next year, no one will be worried about it."

Mr Balfour said the park is expected to be opened within the next two weeks, following custodian training and the approval of a management plan and an emergency management plan from council.

The park will be able to house a maximum of 50 RV's.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council was asked to provide comment but were unable to before this edition went to print.



Palm Tree Creek Caravan Park owner Belinda Stanes.

Picture: DOMANII CAMERON



Commitment progressed

DENIS PETERS

SOUTHERN Grampians Shire Council says it has progressed its commitment to publicise and upgrade Hamilton as an RV-friendly town in accordance with resolutions made on following a comprehensive study into the issue last year.

In a little-publicised feasibility study carried out by the council's futures director Michael McCarthy and reported on to council's ordinary meeting in November last year, the prospect of creating a new, council-operated dump site and stop-over point for visiting recreational vehicles was given a bleak review on financial and social grounds.

The report also found that Hamilton had adequate existing facilities for visiting RVs but conceded there was room for further action to improve and better promote those facilities.

Among key findings in the report to council were:

- # Social problems created by illegal free camping in public recreation reserves within cities, townships and along coastal strips was a growing concern. The issue of litter and human waste being left in the car parks was increasing;

- # The cost to council to manage the environmental impact from RV users staying overnight would be considerable;

- # The issues of garbage and waste water disposal and the provision of facilities required under RV-friendly accreditation would need to be budgeted for on a full cost-recovery basis;

- # The economic contribution by individual self-contained RVs is minimal, with their major cost being the purchase of fuel and supermarket supplies;

- # The approximate cost to install

an adequate dump point was about \$15,000 with additional cost considerations for items such as power and connecting to water supply. With the inclusions of bollards and signage to make sure it was set up appropriately, the overall cost was more likely to be around \$20,000;

- # There were cost concerns over issues of connecting to sewage and water, and ongoing maintenance including cleaning, rubbish removal and any repairs or servicing;

- # Council would be at potential risk of legal action initiated by commercial parks if it breached competitive neutrality principles;

- # Dump points at two Hamilton-based commercial caravan parks and one dump point at the Dunkeld-based community caravan park, were available to guests and non-guests with no financial requirement from council.

On receipt of the report, council voted to undertake a range of measures including to better promote its welcoming stance towards RV travellers and the availability of existing services, and to provide short-term, long-vehicle parking options.

A council spokeswoman said last week that Fitzpatrick Gardens, in south Hamilton, and Lake Hamilton were considered the best sites for short-term, long-vehicle parking and that infrastructure works at Fitzpatrick Gardens were due to be undertaken this financial year, with signage to be installed in the near future.

Furthermore, the Greater Hamilton Caravan and Camping Guide was due to be updated and reprinted by December and would include information and a welcome to RV users, location of dedicated short-term parking options and directions to

visitor information packs that detail overnight and long-stay options, she said.

The name of the guide would also be changed to the Greater Hamilton Caravan, Camping and RV Guide.

Several prominent Hamiltonians have recently been vocal about provision of dedicated dump sites and a dedicated stop-over point for RVs in Hamilton.

Council member and former mayor Albert Calvano has vowed to put a new motion before council calling for council's active support for dedicated facilities and community consultation over a stop-over point.

Lake Hamilton Motor Village and Caravan Park operator Gary Traynor told The Spectator in response to Cr Calvano's stance on the issue that Hamilton and other shire towns were already providing adequate facilities for RVs at no extra cost to ratepayers.

He said that seeking accreditation by the Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) meant costs were footed by ratepayers.

Mr Traynor urged council to consider instead joining VicParks' program called The Community Welcomes Recreational Vehicles which had been developed to assist councils to attract RV travellers to their areas and which promoted a consumer-pays approach.

"The ... program does not offer free camp sites in town but does provide for councils to offer sought-after short-stay/long-bay parking near shopping and other facilities, and to promote local tourist sites of interest," he said.

"So why is Cr Calvano wanting to waste ratepayers' money giving people who are generally in a far better financial position than the residents of the shire a free holiday at ratepayers' expense?"