



Freedom campers not freeloaders

This month's HT is a 'John' edition - with three features - a soccer fan, agronomist and artist, all John. You will have your share of animals too - lemurs, dogs and cane toads.

There is an extra page of Creative Cuts this month, as there is so much going on, plus an update on the Precinct, the Sunshine Coast Show and A Village Wedding Expo.

We take you from Madagascar to Carnarvon Gorge, and I enjoyed reporting on our local showgrounds and how they open up a different sector of the tourism market.

Two years ago Heatley and I spent three joyous months discovering our wondrous country. Clutching my *Camp 7* book we spent some beautiful nights out bush. Our first "free camp" was Mulga Well Rest Area, 225km south of Coober Pedy.

We found a spot not too close (but not too away) from the other travellers and were invited to share hot chocolates by their campfire. As we watched the biggest moon I had ever seen surface, I ventured, "Do you often freecamp?"

Very quickly I was nicely told, "Freedom camping, that's what we prefer to call it."

Our night finished with a friendly bus of revelling

footballers on their way back to Woomera. Thankfully they stayed only briefly, but our quest to enjoy little outback destinations has remained. It gave our family a totally different experience to the caravan parks - in both we experienced the same camaraderie every day.

The Hinterland taps into that market, giving people in self-contained vehicles freedom of choice in where they stay. But

RV Friendly Towns are sparse on the coast - the closest is Eumundi, then Gympie. It is a real opportunity for tourism that the Hinterland is yet to grasp, but also for travellers to enjoy our region.

Does it sound like I want to be on the road again? Hmm.. (It is better than thinking about Queensland employees forced to join organisations and rising vehicle registrations!)

Lastly, congratulations to all the organisers, volunteers and competitors at the Maleny Show - we have a few photos inside for you.

Until next month,
Michelle Gilmore
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Kenilworth Show Society volunteers Olive and Clem Hassall and John Rodwell all agree that the camping keeps the showgrounds viable



by Michelle Gilmore

There is a misconception out there that "grey nomads" bring little to communities, staying where they can for free and living off the smell of an oily rag. But RV's are big business, and rural communities like ours are reaping the benefits.

VISIT THE KENILWORTH Showgrounds and you will see on their notice: "It is not advisable to park near the main ring during cricket season October to April."

If you are a camper, it seems the odd cricket ball is the only disadvantage to enjoying the hospitality of this friendly town.

For \$16 per night you can stay beside a creek, in a powered site, have access to showers, the local pool and it is only a couple of hundred metres to the shops.

Maleny Showgrounds also offer a unique Hinterland camping experience, with a stroll into town along the Obi Obi Creek - at a rock bottom price.

Kenilworth Hall Committee volunteers, Clem and Olive Hassall said the town has been providing the

accommodation for years.

Clem said, "It goes right back to the early '60s. It was very, very small and only caravan clubs used it."

It slowly became bigger and bigger, and has been operating the way it is now for the last ten years.

The hall and grounds also host the Chook Chase motorcycle ride in winter, the Quilt and Craft show in June and the Agricultural Show and Rodeo and Kenilworth Celebrates Art Show in September.

"It definitely helps town out a lot - campers buy a paper, coffee, pies or visit the bowls club at night," Clem explained.

"There are motorhomes, antique motorcycles, caravans - an average of 34-odd vans, stay an average four days.

"One club visited and they collected every member's receipt from the few days, including the fee here.

"All up they had spent \$8000 in town, and that money is kept in town. There were 42 clubs here last year.

"They bring a lot of revenue - it is the only thing that keeps this complex going!"

A fact that has not escaped the Queensland government



who released a toolkit for local governments to increase the provision of camping facilities, and attract more drive tourists to their regions last year.

In turn, Sunshine Coast Council recognised a real need for the widest possible range of accommodation options, and approved an interim policy for limited facilities camping.

It states that "limited facilities camping offers, and serves, a different tourism market to resorts, hotels, motels, holiday rentals and caravan parks".

"The grey nomads are pretty good - we don't have a riff-raff problem. It is a safe, quiet place with amenities - they can camp, and there is more room for the bigger fifth wheelers." Clem continued, "They don't want all the bells and whistles."

And that is the crux of it - all the bells and whistles are already on their vehicle. This group of travellers are "self-

contained campers" - which means "a person or persons who are camping within a structure or vehicle that holds fresh water, will collect and store all greywater and/or blackwater; and has on board cooking and sleeping facilities".

The limited facilities policy means the provision of: rubbish bins; water access; toilets and/or dump point.

It also stipulates short-term camping - not exceeding three nights within any consecutive seven day period.

Olive said that Kenilworth Showgrounds attracts older travellers and family groups, "We had a query about an 18th birthday - and said to them 'you realise it's lights out at ten o'clock'? We didn't hear from them again!"

"But the young ones we've had have been very good. The 'older nomads' are in bed by nine o'clock and everything's quiet."

Caravanning and camping is still booming and research shows families are a growing sector.

There is no doubt the showgrounds are meeting the needs of thousands of travellers - Maleny have recently upgraded their amenities, and Beerwah would like to

be accredited as an RV Friendly Town (very scarce on the Sunshine Coast).

Meanwhile, the Kenilworth Hall Committee purchased the neighbouring mill property in 2013, they plan on setting up more powered sites by the river and for camping during events.

It will also allow more room for the pony club and staying out of the way of those cricket balls!

Kenilworth Showgrounds: 07 5446 0131

An RV Friendly Town™

is one that has met a set of guidelines to ensure they provide a certain amount of amenities, and a certain level of services for these travellers.

When RV tourists enter a town displaying the RVFT sign, they know they will be welcome, certain services will be provided for them that may not be available in other centres, and they will have access to a safe place to stay overnight, and possibly for a longer period.

(from <http://www.cmca.net.au/>)



***Vintage caravans and cars passed through Kenilworth:
the total number of registered RVs in Queensland
reached 131,586 in 2013, up from 122,494 the
previous year*** Source: Caravan Industry Association of Australia



***Right: This
caravanning club
from down south
visit Maleny
Showgrounds every
year***



Guidance in code of ethics

MORE guidance is available for drivers in the National 4WD Code of Ethics. It urges them to:

- Obey the laws and regulations for recreational vehicles that apply to public lands.
- Respect the cultural, heritage and environmental values of public/private land by obeying restrictions that may apply.
- Respect flora and fauna. Stop and look, but never disturb.
- Keep to formed vehicle tracks.
- Keep the environment clean.
- Adopt minimal impact

camping and driving practices.

- Take adequate water, food, fuel, basic spares and a first-aid kit on trips.

- Plan ahead and lodge trip details with a responsible person. Parks and Wildlife Services Tasmania advise drivers to camp at established campsites only and to use modern tents to avoid the need to cut tent poles.

Campers should also wash at least 50 metres away from creeks and minimise the use of soaps and detergents.

The PWS also urges campers to take rubbish out with them.



Riverside park nation's best

BINGARA folks have yet another reason to brag.

The travelling campers' bible, *Caravan & Motorhome On Tour* magazine, has published the results of a poll of some 45,000 campers on the best spots across the state.

Thousands of campsites were compared, and Bingara Riverside Caravan Park – opposite the Gwydir River and within walking distance of downtown Bingara – was voted best in the riverside category with 50 per cent of the vote. Other categories voted on were

best coastal, best tropical, best red dirt and best bush camp site.

The magazine reported: "The town of Bingara itself is becoming an increasingly popular destination with RVers thanks to welcoming locals, attractions and overall RV-friendly attitude! Be sure to add the Gwydir and Bingara to your travels before too many cotton on!"

It's just one more feather in the cap of the small town with the big heart, home to the 1930s art deco Roxy Theatre and the refurbished Roxy Cafe.



Festive spirit at Mareeba

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 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



A group of grey nomads celebrating 2014 Christmas in July at Mareeba.

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, face painting, 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.



Be prepared for the worst

SIMON GLOSSOP

LUCKY for the people in this photo the story ended well.

We came across the scene of this accident shortly after it happened and luckily no one was hurt.

After a car ploughed into their caravan east of Ravensthorpe and wrote it off completely, this couple's insurance covered all their costs and replacement of the caravan (as per the specifics of their insurance policy).

The reason for highlighting this issue is the importance of compliance with regulations to make sure your insurance policy isn't voided, and if you are using a hire caravan or camper trailer it is from a licensed dealer so you know it is insured.

There have been a few reports lately about new web-based share sites offering caravan rental or hosting campers on private property, both of which activities require a licence under WA regulations.

There are also a large number of private operators advertising online camper trailer rental, this also requires a licence and compliance with a number of local government regulations.

Why is this a big deal you may ask yourself?

Well if you pay money to someone for the use of their caravan, camper trailer, motorhome, campervan or to stay on private property and something goes wrong, then you may find your insurance company won't cover you, your vehicle and whatever you are towing or driving.

This may also include your own car and another vehicle if one is involved in an accident with you.

Paying for the use of someone else's caravan or camper trailer (or motorhome or campervan) is different to using your own, this is why rental companies have proper agreements that you have to sign with a number of clauses, insurance opt outs and of course all of that fine print.

In WA our regulations are there to protect consumers and we are lucky we have them, the eastern states do not have this level of state regulations and wish they did.

In WA you need a licence to sell a recreational vehicle (new and second hand), a licence to repair one and if you are operating a facility that provides caravan or camp sites a licence to run

one, even if it is a nature-based site, private house or farm park.

Getting a licence is not as easy as just paying some money out, there are a number of requirements to ensure a business complies with the conditions required to operate under the licence.

All of which benefits consumers using the services.

And where there is the legal requirement to have a licence.

In the case of an accident or claim, insurance companies will request to see the copy of the rental agreement and that all legal requirements have been met.

If a service has been provided that does not comply to the legal provision

of that service as a commercial activity then you may find that neither your insurance or the individual who has provided the service insurance covers the claim.

It is always the worst case scenario when this happens.

The Caravan Industry Association WA, as the peak industry body, is working with all service providers, especially those private operators, to ensure they are aware of their obligations for licensing under WA law.

Our role is to follow up with those people promoting their product and to make sure they are fully compliant.

We will also provide the local government authority with information regarding commercial activities as they

need to comply to local bylaws.

If you are seeking more information on the compliance required for selling, renting or providing a camp site then email the association at info@caravanwa.com.au and always use a licensed dealer, renter or repairer.

It is against the law in WA to provide a caravan or camp site without being a licensed caravan park, nature based park or camping ground and private property may not have a caravan or campsite occupy land on the property.

All of this is to ensure the consumer is protected and has the best experience they can.

caravanwa.com.au



The owners of this caravan were fully covered by their insurance policy because the caravan complied with all WA government regulations.