



## *A word from the President*

### **Obstacles or opportunities**

When you step back and have a look at what is going on in Glasshouse Country you may think all is well, with new housing developments in Beerburum, Glass House Mountains and Beerwah, and the streetscaping and new shopping centre in Beerwah. There are new businesses coming into the area and others relocating to try to improve their exposure to the market. There are also businesses moving south in a search for new customers. What does all this activity say about small businesses in Glasshouse Country? On the other hand, there are other activities being restricted from attracting customers by the barrier of Red Tape. These service providers attract customers into town where they spend their dollars and leave with a smile on their face and are happy to tell their friends about the beauty and hospitality of Glasshouse Country. The market I am referring to is the RV traveller (caravan, motorhome, camper trailers or just a tent). The State Government introduced the Drive Tourism Strategy a few months ago, and to date, Sunshine Coast Council has done little to accommodate this market in Glasshouse Country.

The simple one is the self-contained RV traveller that drives into town, look at where they can park, enjoy what is on offer, spend up to \$100.00 a day in a RV Friendly community and move on. If they are not welcome they will go to another community and patronise those businesses.

The closure of the Beerwah Recreation and Showground Reserve at the end of April is one such example of a community providing a service since the 1980's, with the infrastructure funded by Caloundra City, with the intention to attract this RV market. The consequences of this closure with no solution in place has had a significant impact on the cash flow of chamber members in Beerwah, although meetings were held in February, with an agreed seamless solution to go in place. The chamber has written to council requesting the facility be reopened to the RV travellers as a matter of urgency.

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# The soapbox

Tell us what's  
on your mind

## RV camping at Merbein

Sir,

Free campers cannot afford caravan parks every night. They do spend some nights in them. Many have sold their home and live in their caravan or motorhome, using solar for power.

They don't need jumping pillows/pools etc, they just want a quiet spot to stay, and 99 percent of them clean up their site.

Councils who reject free campers are crazy...they just don't get it when it comes to the benefits. If it wasn't for the free campers, a lot of shops/businesses would be suffering more.

If a couple spent a month or two away, they would spend money on many essentials and extras. They will lunch in cafes and clubs, visit relatives, and if the weather changes, might need clothes

or shoes, new or second-hand.

They might go to the cinema, play golf, tennis, footy, bowls or other sports, go to the doctor, dentist, supermarket or bakery, go to the hairdresser's, butcher shop, newsagent or book store, buy fishing gear, bait or dog food, use a laundromat, buy gifts for family or friends, top up their phone credit, rent a bicycle and purchase fuel and/or tyres for their vehicle.

These people are not free-loaders, they spend money in the places they visit, and it is disappointing to hear of free camping being rejected. My husband and I have stayed in both - caravan parks and free camp sites, depending on how long we are staying in one area.

Many parks don't allow dogs, but we take her away with us, as do many others. There are now more people travelling away than ever before, and councils need to tap into this market to boost the local economy and local tour-

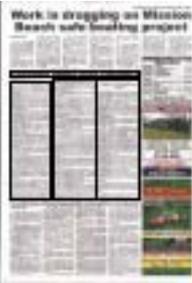
ist attractions.

They all need a lot of help to stay viable...the pension only goes so far, and the Grey Nomads like to support the towns that support them.

Get your head out of the sand council, a caravan park in a town will only cater for some travellers, and that town will be by-passed by the rest.

**Suzy Buck**

**Merbein resident of 28 years**



# Cardwell abuzz with campers

CHARLIE PEEL

The Cassowary Coast Regional Council's camping policies are seeing benefits across the region, especially in Cardwell, according to Manager of Special Projects and Planning, Gerhard Visser.

Presenting a report at last Thursday's Council meeting, Mr Visser discussed a toolkit recently released by the Queensland Government and spoke of how the measures in the toolkit, which are already used by the CCRC, are providing options for campers when other facilities are unavailable.

He said this meant local towns are able to accommodate more visitors and that the flow-on effects of this are beneficial for the region.

"The CCRC have in the past and continue to operate in line with the option present in this toolkit," Mr Visser said.

"We've always allowed camping in showgrounds and other places when there is overflow needed, such as camping spots at the Tully Showgrounds.

"This is a short-term option for vehicles that usually can't get into the other camping areas.

"The other benefit of this facility is it is right at the waste dump point, where caravans and RVs (Recreational Vehicles) can empty their waste."

The discussion about overflow camping options led to Cardwell, where the number of campers has increased dramatically in the year-on-year figures.

Mr Visser said that while the overflow camping wasn't profitable for Council, there was a boost for the local economy.

"Camping at the showgrounds in Cardwell is currently available, but the full cost of this is not covered by the campers and Council absorbs some of the cost," Mr Visser said.

"These positions are overflow positions for when the Caravan Parks are no longer able to take more campers and is for a maximum of 40 vehicles.

"An increase in visitor numbers and the general feeling of excitement in Cardwell is noticeable in the refurbished town.

"People again love Cardwell probably because the reconstruction works are finished and people are coming to see that, or they see it and are impressed and decide to stay. Cardwell has really got a buzz about it at the moment.

"There are always trucks and caravans stop-

ping in and it's really picking up again and the overflow camping option is part of that.

"It allows people to be able to stay and enjoy Cardwell again when the other options aren't available."

Cr Alister Pike asked Mr Visser why the Council didn't get full cost recovery from the campers.

"Full cost recovery is about \$24 per trailer (this is still being determined), and what the camping groups asked for is \$10 per night, so we agreed to compromise and are charging \$13 per night," Mr Visser responded.

"The real cost is still being worked out because we don't know how many times we need to clean the toilet or empty bins and other things like that."

Cr Pike commented that if overflow campers are not covering their costs then services like cleaning toilets might not be able to be conducted as regularly as if they were full paying customers at a caravan park.

"The camping groups need to realise that they can't expect the community to fund them," Cr Pike said.

"Yes and that is what our analysis will help us to determine - a fair cost," Mr Visser said.

Cr Pike asked if a study could be conducted to assess the approximate value that these camping groups inject into the community.

Community Services Director Margaret Darveniza suggested a system where campers are encouraged to place receipts of funds spent in local businesses in a box for Council to review later.

Cardwell Councillor Glenn Raleigh spoke in support of the caravan and RV users and was excited about the increase in visitors in Cardwell and the financial boost this could provide for the town.

"Most of these big rigs have their own toilets and showers built in to them," Cr Raleigh said. "The biggest cost to Council is probably when these vehicles head north and empty their waste into the Tully dump station.

"But these groups inject quite a large sum of money into the local economy.

"This is a feather in the cap for Cardwell tourism, because these caravan and RV groups have a heavy online presence through forums, blogs and social media and if you do something right by them you will reap the benefits, but it can go the other way as well, so it is important that Council compromises somewhat.

"The benefits far outweigh the costs."

## CAMPING V RESTING DEFINITION NEEDED

In a continued discussion of the Queensland Governments "Queensland camping options toolkit", Councillor Alister Pike called for a stronger definition of what constitutes "resting" for vehicles stopping at areas within the Cassowary Coast Regional Council.

He said the distinction between illegal camping and resting was not clear enough and expressed concern about free-riding visitors who choose to illegally park on the roadside or in parks instead of at a caravan park or controlled camping area.

Mayor Bill Shannon said that on the morning of last Thursday's Council meeting he had seen three "illegal campers" at Wheatley Park in Wongaling Beach.

"That's exactly my point, Mr Mayor, how can we say whether they were camped illegally or merely resting," Cr Pike said. "I think this needs to be more clearly defined.

"The community is confused and need to understand what is the accurate definition of camping versus a fatigue management stop."

Cr Pike said his concern was that if someone who is thought to be camping illegally is told to move on by Council and that person says they are resting, then if they do move on under Council's duress and crash then there could be liability issues.

Manager of Special Projects and Planning, Gerhard Visser said the four rest areas in the Cassowary Coast were in place to provide fatigue management stops. He said a full guide as to rest areas from the Queensland Government was in the works and that this could clear up the ambiguities in the definitions.

Cr Shannon said Council must be careful with regard to how they treat the issue as if handled wrongly word could spread that the Cassowary Coast was not a tourist friendly place.

"I think that's the message, tread softly as we are not in the business of getting a reputation through social media that this is the worst place in the world to go near," Cr Shannon said.

"And there are people who will tell you that there are people saying that already, so we don't want to go down that route."

## NYAH – A SWEET SPOT ON THE RIVER

*Adapted from “On the Honey (A Win-Win Story)” by Col  
Coleman in The Wanderer June 2014*

**C**MCA member, Col Coleman, upon leaving the Robinvale Rally, went to Nyah for some rest. To his surprise, he met with a large group of fellow CMCA members staying in the newly formed RV Friendly Park. A lot of the members had been to Nyah before, raving about the beauty and tranquillity of the place.

Upon arrival, the members met with Geoff Bradbury, 'the honey man'. He spoke about the benefits of Nyah becoming an RV Friendly town and wrote down his thoughts for Col Coleman to take back to his charter club. The words he shared with Mr. Coleman are reprinted here:

"The Nyah District community would very much like to thank the CMCA for their assistance and advice in setting up the RV camping area at Nyah. As a staging area for both the Balranald Solos Rally and then the Robinvale – grown-ups, so the Solos tell me – Rally, we have enjoyed a very fruitful few weeks. With numbers between the 70s and up to mid-80s, it has been a tremendous boost for our community.

"The idea of providing an RV campsite was raised some years ago when it was obvious that the powers that be were determined to relocate harness racing from Nyah to nearby Swan Hill after forty-seven years at Nyah for reasons best known only to them. Despite our efforts there was no way we were going to stop it so we had to come up with something to support our small rural community. We were struggling like so many rural communities.

"By far our greatest assets were the Murray River and its natural environment. A few campers were using the area on a casual basis. A chance encounter with several members of the CMCA travelling to Broken Hill for a rally was really where an idea was conceived and things began to take shape.

"A concept was put to a Community Planning Meeting run by the Rural City of Swan Hill and adopted unanimously. So with the total support of the council, the community, and CMCA, we were able to set the plans in motion. We acknowledge the support of head office but are particularly grateful for the on-site advice and knowledge of David and Lyn Fricke. Thanks Chalkies.

"The project was gladly taken on by the local Lions Club and continues to be of great benefit to the entire Nyah District and the wider Swan Hill region. Our only request of campers was 'spend a bit in town if you have to and if you think it is a good place to stop - tell others'.

"By wide demand, we installed an honesty/donation box a year or



so ago and we continue to be amazed at campers' response. In the last month alone we have received close to \$2000 from donations. We also receive many comments through the box and are rated by many as among the best RV campsites in the country. All we do is to try to make them feel welcome and relaxed for up to seven nights. We must be doing something right as we are welcoming many repeat offenders back to Nyah.

"Our aim is to provide a safe, welcoming and friendly place for those fully self-contained travellers who want to take advantage of their right to freedom of choice where to stop and at the same time to support our community. We are neither opposed to caravan parks nor in competition with them; we are just offering freedom of choice. And we will continue to support this freedom at any level.

"So, a very big thanks to the CMCA for their ongoing backing over the years since our launch and a special thanks to all those travellers who have chosen to spend a few days with us. A special thanks to the CMCA members who have chosen to stay here in recent weeks.

"We hope to see many of you back at some time in the future."  
Geoff 'the honey man' Bradbury, project co-ordinator.





## **LOCAL AREA TO RECEIVE PROMOTIONAL BOOST**

**R**ecently, Ray Jones was appointed to the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's (CMCA) National Member Services Team (NMST) NSW.

This appointment comes after a hugely successful job of hosting the Robinvale CMCA rally. Being a part of the NMST allows Mr. Jones to represent the CMCA regarding membership services and promotional opportunities within towns. With Mr. Jones on the services team, he has the capacity to promote the Robinvale/Euston area in the club's magazine, *The Wanderer*.

Other responsibilities include encouraging towns and businesses to become RV Friendly. A town can become an RV Friendly town by offering access

to potable water, access to a dumping point, and areas for overnight parking. A business or town can become an RV Friendly Destination by offering overnight parking or some kind of deal to CMCA members. Once a town or business is deemed RV Friendly, their location becomes available to the 60,000 members in the club and gets promoted in their club magazine.

In the local area, many places have taken the opportunity to become RV Friendly. Both Robinvale and Euston are RV Friendly towns. The Euston Club and Euston Caravan Park are RV Friendly. Tooleybuc has become an RV Friendly

Destination by offering their car park adjacent to the football grounds for overnight parking and Tooleybuc has proved a popular overnight spot for members travelling in the area.

Ray Jones spoke about the importance of towns becoming RV Friendly. "The growing demographic of grey nomads mean more people are travelling. Pair that alongside the decreased number of available caravan parks and these towns that become RV Friendly stand to benefit from an injection of funds into their local economies."