



# ON THE MOVE

## TRAVEL \ SARAH MARINOS meets some grey nomads

**T**he grey nomads are taking to Australia's roads in increasing numbers. Here, some of them explain why they love an open road and offer tips for other travellers.

### "IT'S A RETIREES' PLAYGROUND OUT THERE"

**Kevin and Marilyn Friend** downsized their family home for a unit so they can lock up and leave. They've since travelled 400,000 kilometres in their pop-top caravan.

When Kevin retired from his management job with an insurance company at the age of 54 he immediately made plans to start travelling. Since then, he and his wife, Marilyn, now in their early 60s, have crossed New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

"On our first big trip we went through New South Wales, through Carnarvon Gorge in Central Queensland and Takarakka Bush Resort. We went up to Cooktown and then made it to Port Douglas, Cape Tribulation and across the Daintree River," he says.

"We travelled down the Queensland and NSW coasts to home and were away for three months. When we got home we wanted to pack up and go again."

At Christmas, the Friends headed to Sydney for the New Year. In early March they travelled to Perth before heading to Canada and Alaska for two months. After a brief stop-off in Melbourne, they're about to hook up the caravan and set

off for Tweed Heads. They haven't spent winter in Victoria for 13 years. "I was born and bred in country NSW and love the outdoors, the wildflowers and gorges and the outback. I couldn't be cooped up in the city," Kevin says.

"Since retiring and travelling I've lost weight, my blood pressure has improved and we're both fitter. There's no stress in our life now and it's been wonderful to travel with Marilyn. We have a friend in our caravan club who bought a new caravan at 94 years old - and we'll be travelling for as long as we can, too."

Plan your route and use caravan and camping guides to work out stops along the way.

Use free camping spots and stay at 2- or 3-star rated camping parks. If you want peace, avoid parks that target families.

If you buy a caravan, do a towing course with the RACV.

### "WE LIKE TO BE MASTERS OF OUR OWN DESTINY"

**Stan and Margaret Woolard**, from Newcomb are in their late 70s. They travel Australia in their Mercedes Sprinter motorhome.

During 30 years with Victoria Police, Stan Woolard avidly read about the outback. So when he retired, he and Margaret decided to see some far-flung places themselves.

On their first trip they travelled for 10 months and nicknamed that adventure the "Australia All Over" tour, Stan says. "We travelled 26,500 kilometres and one night I remember stopping for dinner at the now defunct old-style Darwin Hotel. Margaret and I sat outside surrounded by palm trees and had a nice bottle of wine."

Last September the Woolards packed up their motorhome and travelled to Mildura, Hay and Griffith in NSW and then north-east to Queensland. On the way home they stopped at Burren Junction to enjoy the hot water springs, and crossed country Victoria to Geelong.

"One of the highlights was visiting a local school in Hebel. We stopped there four years ago and I remember seeing a procession of 28 children - the total school population - being taught to ride bicycles. The school now has

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**MARILYN & KEVIN FRIEND**

25 pupils," Stan says. "Travelling in this way has enabled us to see places we'd never otherwise see. We wouldn't drive as far and stop at motels, and we wouldn't go on a coach tour because we don't want to be bound by someone else's itinerary. We like to be masters of our own destiny."

Join the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia. Don't camp within 20 kilometres of a small township so you don't annoy locals, and pick up firewood before you get to a campsite. Well-used campsites may already have been stripped of firewood.

Talk to fellow travellers when you stop for morning tea or lunch – particularly people arriving from the opposite direction. They can tell you where to buy cheap fuel, where

to find roadside stalls selling fresh food and the location of the best free camping spots.

#### **"WE WENT ON LONG-SERVICE LEAVE AND NEVER RETURNED"**

**Kath and Rex Breen** are in their early 60s. They sold their horticultural business about 10 years ago and have since spent part of their year travelling and volunteering in Queensland.

The Breens' Winnebago Alpine motorhome has many comforts of home. With its own generator, water supply, solar panels and toilet and shower, when the couple take to the road they can be self-sufficient.

In the several years since the couple have owned their

motorhome, they've travelled about 94,000 kilometres – mostly from Victoria to Queensland.

Every winter they head north to help out with Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education. The couple set up their motorhome on a rural property and, while Kath tutors the local children, Rex helps around the property.

"From late May to early September we travelled as far as Townsville and then headed west and spent seven weeks on a cattle and sheep property. Kath taught the children and I helped with shearing and fencing off dams," Rex says.

"There's nothing better than pulling up at night and watching the moon rise, or listening to the birds singing at sunrise."

Kath enjoys the freedom that comes with waking to new scenery each morning.

"I step outside and might have flat plains as far as I can see or we might be tucked in among the hills. It's exciting to be somewhere different every morning," she says.

The couple are doing another volunteer trip in Queensland this winter and they also plan to take their motorhome to Darwin and Tasmania. Their longest trip has been a three-and-a-half-month trip to WA and around the coast of Australia.

"It's formed a strong bond between us – we often say, 'Do you remember when we went there?'" Kath says.

"We've shared some great experiences and met some interesting people."

Buy as good a motorhome as you can afford and a vehicle that is well-maintained.

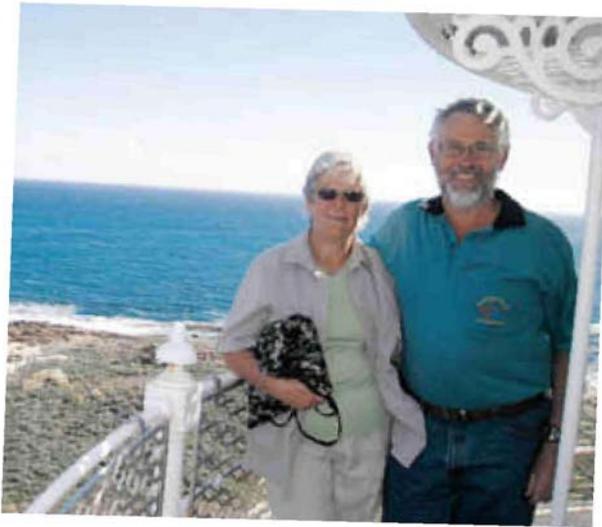
Don't be put off by licence requirements and limit yourself to a vehicle that you can drive with a car licence. It's not overly difficult to get an endorsed licence to drive a bigger vehicle. Plan each leg of your journey so you know where to stop overnight, where dump points are located and where you can buy provisions. \

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**MARGARET & STAN WOOLARD**



**KATH & REX BREEN**



# RV project still alive



**Ellouise Crawford**

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A RECOMMENDATION, which would have seen Gawler abandon its attempt to become RV Friendly accredited, has been ignored by elected members.

At a recent council committee meeting, a staff-prepared report suggested council write to the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia, advising that it will not be pursuing an RV Friendly site within Gawler.

However, the motion failed to gain the required majority support, with committee members instead deciding to simply receive the staff report and project update.

Elected members in support of abandoning the RV Friendly push included councillors Paul Koch, David Hughes, Karen Redman and Adrian Shackley, while councillors Brian Thom, Barry Neylon, Diane Fraser, Scott Fraser, Kevin Fischer and Mayor Brian Sambell were opposed.

Gawler Council has been investigating the merits of gaining RV Friendly Town accreditation since it was approached by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia in 2011.

To gain this status, a town must provide facilities and services, such as a dumping point for waste and grey water, a water-refill point and a safe parking area.

Some towns even provide shelters and barbecues.

Late last year, Gawler Council began its investigations into possible RV-parking sites, including a Murray Street reserve near Dead Man's Pass, Princes



Park, Clonlea Reserve or the caravan park.

"Council staff continued to investigate potential RV locations within the Town of Gawler, however the number of suitable sites is limited due to the nature of the reserves being closed to public access between dusk and dawn or leased to sporting clubs for their use," council's most recent report states.

"All sites investigated would require infrastructure work to make them suitable for use by recreational vehicles."

The estimated capital cost of establishing an RV Friendly facility is \$34,000, plus an extra \$20,000 if council installed security cameras at the dump site.

Ongoing maintenance would cost about \$21,250 a year.

Funding of such infrastructure works was considered during 2014/15 budget deliberations and did not receive the support of elected members.



## **NEWS** *Annual show* **Following grows for open road**

EXPLORING our big brown land remains at the forefront of travel agendas if this year's Queensland Caravan, Camping and Touring Holiday Show is any indication.

More than 65,000 people visited the show over seven days, an increase on the previous year.

Prospective holiday-makers were not reluctant to open their wallets either, with an estimated \$60 million recorded in sales over the week-long event, including sales of more than 1200 caravans and other recreational vehicle types, showing caravan and camping holidays are still a popular option with Queenslanders.

The crowds enjoyed displays from more than 300 exhibitors, showcasing everything from top of the range caravans and motorhomes to more budget-friendly camper trailers and camping gear, and a huge array of gadgets and accessories to make family holidays more comfortable and enjoyable.

Show manager Jason Plant is already making plans to enhance the event in 2015.

"We had incredibly positive feedback from both exhibitors and attendees during the show, and we were really pleased to see more families and children enjoying the displays and entertainment than ever before, so it shows the event is growing and has a strong future ahead of it," he said.

One of the show exhibitors, Glen Gall, from Kedron Caravans, also declared it the best show yet, saying he felt a great atmosphere was created with the roaming band and street performers entertaining visitors and exhibitors alike.

"I can't remember a show that was so enjoyable that on completion we felt we could do it all again the following week," he said.

"With the cooking displays, music,

great seminars and positive crowds, it was a fantastic event and we were very proud and genuinely excited to be involved."