



ELWOOD

Problem parks itself

THE Elwood foreshore is the place to be for backpackers, after a crackdown at Sandridge beach pushed the freeloaders southward.

When the *Leader* recently visited, campervans crowded the Elwood beach car-park, blatantly flouting parking restrictions.

Elwood resident David

Frank called on authorities to act, complaining of vans parked in the spot every night and tents pitched on the foreshore.

Mayor Amanda Stevens said the council could not replicate the Sandridge solution as the campervans were on a public road.

“Parking (there) can’t be

restricted at certain hours of the day or night and access can’t be blocked with a gate,” Cr Stevens said.

She promised to “work towards a solution”.

St Kilda Police Senior Sergeant Mark Denton said police understood residents’ concerns and would work with the council.



Backpackers in Elwood.



Make yourself at home

Penola plays host to influx of campers

KYRA SYKES

PENOLA faced a rare traffic jam on Monday when around 250 motorhomes arrived in the town.

Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) solo network members arrived in the region with McCorquindale Park as a base for an annual rally this week.

Church Street resembled a busy city street as visitors arrived, with businesses and residents ready to welcome CMCA members.

Most stores have donated vouchers or small gifts for the members' greeting bags and display signs in store windows welcomed the solo travellers.

Continued page 4





Home away from home

Motorhome club members set up camp in Penola

From front page

The CMCA members are keeping all receipts when making purchases in the region and will calculate the total dollar figure of money spent in Penola at the end of the week.

Preparing for a week filled with events throughout the region, members spent Monday setting up before starting their itinerary.

With access to Rymill Hall, events will include dance les-

sons, information displays and photography and technology sessions throughout the week.

The supper room provides a meeting place for morning and afternoon tea, as well as a place to relax.

Key events include a bus wine tour through Coonawarra, dinner at the Prince of Wales Hotel with music, a bus trip to the Naracoorte Caves, an open day with market stalls and the annual dinner dance.



ARRIVAL: Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia solo network members Bill Devine, Ray White, Mannie Ryles and John Stickland were part of the welcome crew leading vans and motorhomes to their sites at McCorquindale Park on Monday.

Pictures: KYRA SYKES



Our say ...

One of the more intriguing aspects of Eurobodalla council's visitor services proposal is that of the 11 "personal consultations" by the authors, six of them were with USA tourism bodies – including Chicago, Philadelphia, and Florida Keys.

Yet they didn't talk to the Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) an organisation of some 30 years standing, and with some 60,000 members whose hobby is wandering around the country visiting places like the Eurobodalla and Narooma.

The CMCA could have told council's researchers that Americans don't travel like we do: they go and park. It could have told them about the \$200 a day grey nomads regularly inject into regional economies where they stay. It could have told them about RV Friendly Towns, a scheme used by towns all over Australia to attract CMCA "wanderers" and others with a suite of visitor-friendly facilities.

These facilities include fuel availability, large vehicle parking near to shops, services like doctor and dentist – and an easily found and accessible VIC (visitor information centre).

Sounds like Narooma? So it becomes a fair question why council hasn't bothered to investigate existing ways of boosting tourism, like the RV Friendly scheme, and talked to readily available sources like CMCA who know what happens in Australia?

Perhaps it has already made up its mind, and mayor Brown's truncated 42-day consultation is just window-dressing?



Jemmys Pt just the freebie start

A free recreational vehicle (RV) camping trial will run at Lakes Entrance's Rotary Park, East Gippsland Shire Council has confirmed.

And Lakes Entrance Action Development Association members have heard the council wants to trial another area in Lakes Entrance in addition to the Jemmys Point site.

East Gippsland Shire manager major projects and economic development, Tim Ellis, said the short-term overnight parking (STOP) zones were designed to corral itinerate campers from the town's car parks and foreshore.

He also said the council would increase the onset of law enforcement at suitable times to ensure free camping is done in the STOP zones, and that campers are only staying within the designated hours.

But local caravan park owners have questioned the shire's motives for trialling free camping.

One Lakes Entrance caravan park owner, Steve Weidemann, like other operators, supports free camping in the shire as has been established in Cann River and Genoa, but just not in Lakes Entrance or anywhere that competes with commercial operators.

I'd like to try and understand why you'd like this right in Lakes Entrance, Mr Weidemann asked Mr Ellis.

Genoa's great, Cann River's great, because they don't have 20 caravan parks.

We've got 20 caravan parks in Lakes Entrance, why is it

necessary to provide free camping?

I've spoken to people who have stayed in Rosedale, which has a 48-hour duration, and they stay there seven days. They never visit Rosedale, and never get moved on, or never get asked any questions.

Free camping is severely exploited.

Mr Ellis said consultation with RV users had gone on since December last year.

He also said the shire working closely with the South Gippsland and Wellington shire councils, which are in similar stages with free camping.

The shire will install appropriate signage and also details on commercial alternatives.

The reason we've gone down this path is that we know there's itinerate campers on the foreshore, Mr Ellis told LEADA last week.

We know they're coming, and we know there's a market, but they do want to come here. Our view is that we want to accept them, but corral them in one area.

Mr Weidemann, however, believes not enough research has gone into the proposal.

He says there were no provisions for rubbish disposal and grey water management, but also raised the idea of appropriate policing before trialling free camping as the solution to tidy up itinerate campers along the foreshore.

I don't believe the shire has put enough into this other than slamming it into our face, saying go for it, free camping area.

What do you plan to do for your provisions of grey water disposal, rubbish disposal? What should also be included, is liability for public safety, lighting, and emergency procedures etc., he said.

It's a slap in the face to businesses in the area, isn't it?

The Log Crossing and Burnt Bridge free camping sites were also discussed.

While Mr Ellis said free camping would be trialled closer to town because people weren't using the sites, locals believe it was simply through a lack of knowledge.

The solution to free camping will be assessed after the 12-month trial.



Grey nomads rolled into town

APPROXIMATELY 350 people from around Australia in buses, fifth wheelers and Winnebagos lobbed into the Numurkah showgrounds last week.

Numurkah hosted a Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's Combined Victorian Chapter rally for the second time since 2013.

Event co-ordinator Chrissy Eustace said the CMCA had earmarked Numurkah for future rallies, after the success of the last one.

"People were happy with the grounds and we decided to come back again," she said. "The townspeople made us so welcome. Everyone came back so happy."

She said the rally also offered a chance for members to raise funds for Blaze Aid and local service groups like the Lions, Rotary and CFA.

The CMCA holds national and state based rallies for members to catch up with each other, and to make new friends.

Activities included craft classes, disc bowls and ladder golf, which finished up with the 4pm happy hour, where members could meet over a glass of wine.

The Wizard of Oz then made an appearance at the Saturday night ball.

Ms Eustace said the CMCA is a caring and inclusive community that looks out for its members, and encourages solo travellers to mingle with new faces.

"We had one lady with dementia who we looked out for. We discovered she had relatives in Numurkah. It shows the caring attitude, we are like an extended family."

She said the town had been very accommodating for the event.

"We've had excellent cooperation from the Moira Shire. We have to thank the locals for letting us use the grounds."

Glenda Walters from Bannockburn had set up camp in her converted school bus and was settling in with her two dogs.

Ms Walters goes away once a month and drives annually to Western Australia. She said the Numurkah rally offered her the chance to catch up with old friends.

"We just had lunch at the golf club, they did a good meal."

Numurkah local Carmel Connellan had joined the rally as part of the Goulburn Valley Gypsy Chapter.

"My daughter can't believe we would park our motorhome at the showgrounds when we live just down the road."

Ms Connellan said she was dismayed by changes to town camping regulations after no camping signs were put up at the Broken Creek reserve.

"The council stopped us camping by the creek. We think it's wrong to end camping there. We would just move onto another town."

This follows after Numurkah became an RV Friendly town in 2010, by providing a free dump point at the showgrounds.

"An RV Friendly town allows you to camp within distance of town amenities, not just provide dump points. We shouldn't be forced into paying for caravan parks," Ms Connellan said.

"I don't see how Numurkah is an RV

Friendly town when there are signs that say no camping."



Happy campers ... Glenda Walters and Bernie Alletsee from Melbourne chill out during happy hour.

