



Port cracks down on campervans

Kent Acott

Fremantle Port authorities are cracking down on campers illegally parking on the South and North moles.

As *The West Australian* reported last year, complaints about campervans parking on the moles overnight prompted authorities to consider closing the moles at night.

But there was concern that this last-resort measure would disadvantage fishermen who have been using the moles for decades. So three-hour parking restrictions were introduced.

Despite signs being erected at the entrances to both moles, campers continued to ignore them.

In a crackdown over the last month, the port's traffic co-ordinator has issued 25 warnings to illegally parked campers.

Their registration details were recorded and, if they

offend again, their vehicles will be towed away or clamped and they would be fined.

A port spokeswoman said illegal parking on the moles had been an issue for a couple of years.

When *The West* visited the South Mole last year several people were camping overnight.

One van owner said staying on South Mole was a "stop-gap measure" while he searched for part-time work on his around-Australia holiday.

Matt Bufton, who had been fishing from the moles for more than 20 years, said campervans had been a problem for a long time.

Mr Bufton said there had been times when the moles had been temporarily closed to keep them out.

"They are pains," he said.

"We come down here to fish and they've taken all the parking spots."



Kicked out and never coming back

BY TIM CONNELL

RECREATIONAL van users visiting Stockton have left and vowed never to return following a police and council crackdown on camping in public parks.

Several visitors packed up and drove their vans out of Stockton Ballast Ground and out of Newcastle altogether on Wednesday afternoon as police swept through a car park and threatened fines of \$110 to anyone still there in the morning.

"It's a low-down move," holidaymaker Warren Knight, of Ettalong Beach, told the *Newcastle Herald*.

As reported by the *Herald*, Newcastle City Council had warned visitors not to camp in public parks, and stated that neither locals nor visitors wanted to be "confronted by people relieving themselves behind a tree".

Mr Knight and his wife Barbara said they were regular visitors, and the authorities' approach was insulting.

"Just because there might be the odd bad [visitor], we're all being judged," Mr Knight said.

"Look around [the

grounds] when we leave. If you find anything at all, I want you to write that."

While some campers joked that \$110 might be worth a night's accommodation compared with the cost of the nearby caravan park, Mrs Knight said she was sad to be leaving.

"I have family who are buried in the Stockton Cemetery. We shop and spend money here; we get the ferry across to have dinner," she said.

"I love Stockton, but this has put a dampener on things."

One man, who did not want to be named, planned to stay overnight in his van on the Ballast Ground and get up early to beat any council rangers who might visit.

Some visitors hoped to park their vans somewhere in the streets of Stockton and still ring in the new year with one of the best views in the city, but some had resigned themselves to a disappointing night driving home.

An annual influx of recreational vans to the Stockton foreshore usually begins in the days before New Year's Eve, but those entering via

Fullerton Street this week have found roadside electronic signs reading "No camping or parking on reserves in Stockton".

The council has pointed out that the same rules applied regarding camping in public parks last season, but van users complain that a harsher interpretation has been applied this summer.

"They're targeting us, and we don't know why they're targeting us," Jo Chapman, a visitor from Blackhead Beach, said.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why are we not more welcoming of RVs

IT CONTINUES to puzzle me how indifferent and even hostile Newcastle City Council seems to be towards recreational vehicles (RVs). And yet, RVs are almost everywhere to be found around Australia.

Could it have something to do with council's stewardship of the Stockton Beach Holiday Park? Or perhaps a self-image of a city so large and successful that it could not benefit from RVs?

Or has council always been awaiting a merger with Port Stephens Council, which runs several holiday parks and seems to appreciate the benefits RVs bring to an area?

RVs are not just about peak holiday periods any more, even if more of them are to be found out and about. The phenomenon of well-heeled "grey nomads" (yes, it is expensive) travelling around Australia in their RVs and discovering their own backyard has been around for some time, and continues to grow strongly.

Not all "grey nomads" visit only once; some of them are looking for places to settle down.

What sort of a welcoming message is given out when there is not even a visitor information centre for RVs to stop at to see what's on offer? RVs come in all shapes and sizes, some very long and large, and have special parking needs, even for brief stops.

The welcoming message aspect is even more important for overseas visitors in motorhomes and campervans; how could they be welcomed and facilitated, rather than just being forced to move on?

Having done the "grey nomad" thing in 2011, I know the difference between welcoming RV-friendly towns and the rest. Take the short drive to Bulahdelah if you want to see an example of a welcoming community working in close partnership with its council (Great Lakes) in facilitating free short-term RV accommodation to mutual benefit; the town is positively buzzing. Newcastle, unfortunately, is not such a place, at least as far as RVs go.

Would Stockton benefit from being con-

sidered an entry point for RVs to Newcastle?

There's certainly plenty of land on which to locate a visitor information centre to cater for RVs, with easy access by ferry to Newcastle for a short visit. It would surely make for a good start to realizing the significant potential to be unlocked from RV travellers. To focus on camping at Stockton on New

Year's Eve is to miss the bigger picture of a significant opportunity going unrealized.

Is Newcastle ever going to be a welcoming place for RVs?

Karel Grezl, Charlestown



LOST OPPORTUNITY: Newcastle is not a welcoming city for recreational vehicles, says reader Karel Grezel.



Plans to make Maryborough the RV capital

THREE Fraser Coast Council candidates have banded together, vowing to make Maryborough the RV capital of Australia.

Gordon Dale, Mark Williams and Darryl Gleich, standing for Division 2, Division 3 and Division 4, were frustrated that Bundaberg mayoral candidate Jack Dempsey was campaigning to create an RV super park to capitalise on the baby boomers visiting the region.

The three men said they

were angry that Bundaberg was seizing the opportunity after what they saw as two years of stalling and poor decisions from the current council.

Mr Williams said the city was now at serious risk of losing out to Bundaberg and

he was hoping to take immediate action to bring the recreational travellers to Maryborough by opening up more of Alan and June Brown car park in Maryborough's CBD for self-contained RVs.

But Fraser Coast Mayor

Gerard O'Connell said he was already eight months ahead of that with the implementation of the Fraser Coast Camping Strategy. He said the Alan and June Brown car park was already available to RV owners as part of the Stop and Shop campaign, which requires RV travellers to spend a minimum of \$10 at a local business.

Cr O'Connell said additional spaces were available in Tiaro, Bauple and Hervey Bay.

He said the Fraser Coast council was the first council to get the strategy to this stage.

However Mr Gleich said the current strategy requiring people to prove a purchase was not attracting RV travellers.

"The strategy is absurd and has had negative impact," he said.

"It has sent a message to the RV community that the Fraser Coast is a no-go area for this lucrative market," Mr Gleich said.

“It has sent a message to the RV community that the Fraser Coast is a no-go area for this lucrative market

– Darryl Gleich