



Quilpie shire council suspects RV-friendly status is the way to nomads' hearts.

Shire reaches out to freedom campers

QUILPIE

THE SHIRE council has told the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia it is interested in establishing a free RV park. The proposal was in response to the club calling for expressions of interest from councils across the state.

Mayor Stuart Mackenzie said free camping had been an issue for many years. "It does concern some local businesses, especially caravan park owners, but in our experience

it just brings benefits," he said. As chairman of the outback Qld tourism association, he insisted the positives far outweighed the negatives. "It is very beneficial for towns to embrace free campers because they do spend money in towns, irrespective of whether they stay in caravan parks or not."

Tourists tended to pull off the road and camp anywhere anyway, so a camping area close to town would encourage them to frequent

the town. And any town seen as not being RV friendly would lose business as tourists kept driving.

Sonia Simpson and her husband Don are Cunnamulla converts to nomadism and CMCA members. They own a self-contained motorhome with a toilet, shower and solar-powered generator, and are always on the look out for RV friendly towns. "We don't want to have to pay extra to have all those facilities we don't want," she said.



Victory for ratepayers

By EMMA WATSON

IT would appear Latrobe Valley residents have had a victory in voicing their objections to proposed changes to one of council's local laws.

Permits will not be required to use recreational vehicles or tracks on private property after Latrobe City officers removed the clause from council's draft local law 2.

"Whatever you want to do on private property is up to you, if you're not annoying people too much," Latrobe Valley resident Matt Walker said.

"I do know council had other concerns, but they will be addressed in other ways now."

Mr Walker runs a Facebook page opposing council's proposed recreational vehicle clause, which has gained about 260 'likes'.

He said it was surprising council had removed the clause entirely, but said it was the "ultimate result".

Council had received more than 400 submissions in its first round of consultation, only two of which supported the draft.

Close to 90 per cent of those submissions opposed having a permit to use recreational vehicles or tracks on private property, with a petition against the proposal gaining close to 500 signatures.

Councillors requested changes be made after taking that feedback on board.

The amendments were presented to councillors on Monday night - and now the draft's out for public viewing again to see what the community thinks.

"I encourage people (those who made a submission or were

interested in the document previously) to look at it again and make sure they're happy," Latrobe City general manager of city development Phil Stone said.

"If they still have questions, come along to the community meeting and they can have their questions answered.

"We definitely want to know, have we got it right this time?"

Mr Stone said the local law 2 could be quite a dry document to read, but it sought to "protect the amenity and good order of the local community".

He said the current proposed changes were an effort to "strengthen, tighten and adjust" Latrobe City's local laws.

Other changes involve clarity around when permits are needed for occasional events at council parks, gardens and reserves, as well as for festivals in public places.

Stronger penalties will also apply for commercial or industrial buildings that have become dilapidated.

Mr Stone conceded council could not please everybody, but wanted a sense of consensus among residents.

The second round of community consultation will involve public meetings and a social media campaign. It is expected councillors will consider all submissions at a meeting on 22 August, and vote on the law's adoption on 12 September. The proposed draft Community Amenity Local Law No. 2 2016 can be viewed on council's website, at libraries or customer service centres.



Pioneer park debate heats up

BY MELISSA CUNNINGHAM

A BALLARAT councillor says the city's controversial free camping for campervans and motorhomes is "not dead in the water" despite no new site being determined after the Pioneer Park site was shut down in March.

Councillor Vicki Coltman said discussions were underway to find a new site to allow recreational vehicles to stay in Ballarat for little or no cost.

"Right from the beginning of this proposal the council have made it clear we are not opposed to the idea of freedom camping but we do believe Pioneer Park was not the best representation of our beautiful city," Cr Coltman said. "The idea is not dead in the water as such. The council are looking at other sites in surrounding townships which will bring economic benefit not just to the city, but also boost townships on the outskirts of Ballarat."

Cr Coltman said it would

be unviable to establish a freedom camping site in the heart of the CBD.

Ideas floated so far included opening a site in an area like Miners Rest or at the council run caravan park in Learmonth.

Cr Coltman said while there had been issues with people illegally camping in the park after it was closed patrols of the site by coun-

cil officers and community members had led to a reduction in this behaviour.

It comes after the editor of Caravan and Motorhome on Tour magazine, Fred Wright, criticised the council for its lack of free camping sites for recreational vehicles. Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's Grant Tillett maintained Pioneer Park was the best option.

Mr Tillett interviewed about 3000 holiday-goers who used the freedom camping site over the 12-month trial. He said about 70 per cent said they would not have stopped in Ballarat if it

wasn't available.

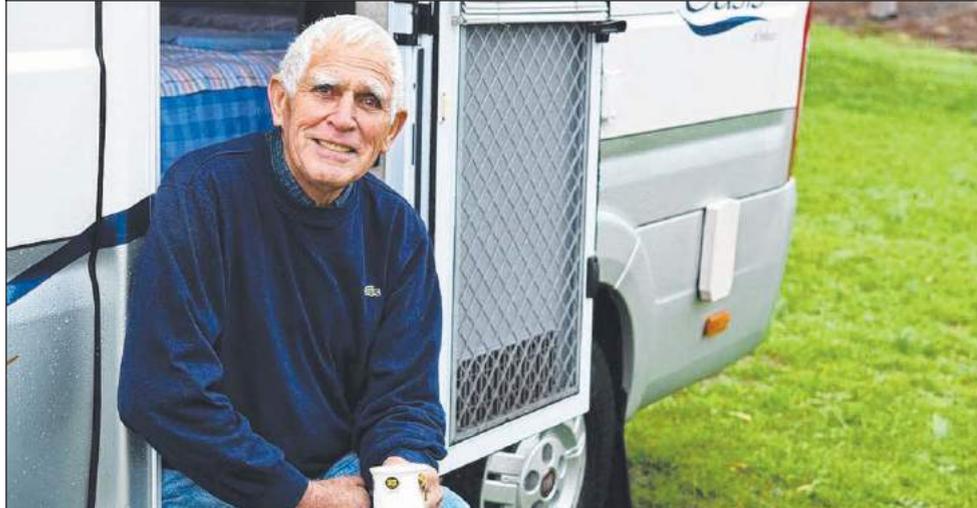
"These people came to Ballarat because we had the option of free camping available to them," Mr Tillett said. "Without a free camping site we are losing thousands of visitors ever year who spend money in Ballarat." He said recreational vehicle travel had "exploded" in recent years.

"Ballarat was a front-runner in this type of travel but now it is lagging behind."

The issue has long been surrounded in controversy with caravan park owners alleging their businesses had been negatively impacted and claims people were overstaying the two permitted nights and not meeting the self-containment water and toilet measures during the trial.



TOURISM



Motorhome owner Raymond Cowley at the Modbury Sporting Complex where the Tea Tree Gully Council is investigating having a "Park and Dump". Picture: TOM HUNTLEY

A hub for motorhomes

Sarah Spencer

A PARK and dump point in Modbury for mobile homes will boost tourist trade in the district, a local councillor says.

At a Tea Tree Gully Council meeting earlier this month, Cr Robin Coleman asked elected members to support a plan to install a designated dump point for caravan waste at Modbury Sporting Complex.

He said a park and dump – where caravan and motorhome owners can lawfully discard dishwater and toilet

waste – would encourage people to stop into the district or stay for the night, providing an economic boost to local businesses.

"It would be the first time in the history of the City of Tea Tree Gully that I'm aware that we would finally become connected to the tourist trade," Cr Coleman said. "We've had no visitor information centre, no caravan park in the City of Tea Tree Gully, no dump point."

Dernancourt resident Raymond Cowley, from Campervan Motorhome Club of Australia, said a

park and dump was a good way to attract tourists.

"There are two components to a dump point where we unload grey water – dish and shower water – and black water (toilet waste)," Mr Cowley said.

"Mostly people just come and stay the night and the next morning they will go off shopping, visit pubs and bakeries, do a tour around the town and spend a fair amount of money."

A report on the plan will now be prepared for council.

Info centre rejected, Page 11



RV-friendly tag to boost city tourism

Louise Allingham

The City of Karratha is working with Discovery Parks to help Karratha achieve a recreational vehicle-friendly status to give the region's tourism industry a boost.

The council will support Discovery Parks in creating a low-cost RV area on its Balmoral Caravan Park site by putting \$25,000 towards erecting a dividing fence and will establish signage to guide visitors to the facility.

City of Karratha Deputy Mayor John Lally said achieving the Caravan and Motorhome Club of Australia designation will expand the tourism industry.

"We have been working on building our tourism industry for quite some time now, and it's great to see so many companies like Discovery Parks putting forward proposals to grow the industry," he said.

"More self-drive tourists potentially staying longer will mean more money spent at our local businesses like cafes, mechanics and shops which is great for our local economy."

Karratha Visitor Centre manager Jane Knapp said they supported the council's decision to attain RV-friendly status.

"Without it those ones will go through and stop in Port Hedland," she said. "We want them to stop here and want

them to see it's a destination."

Ms Knapp said it will encourage tourists to come to town and stay for a longer period of time.

The City saw the need to progress to RV Friendly Town status after an initiative by the Pilbara Regional Council.

The PRC undertook the Pilbara Recreational Vehicle Friendly study in response to the perceived lack of RV-friendly facilities in Karratha. The study noted almost 80 per cent of the region's tourists arrive by road.

"There is already a strong self-drive tourism market in Karratha, and having the RV-friendly designation will provide great promotion for us among this market segment," Mr Lally said.



So what does it mean to be RV friendly?

TO be RV friendly or not?

Well according to Cr Rick Kearney at last week's Goondiwindi Regional Council meeting, we already are.

But to make sure, the Goondiwindi Regional Council is looking at its RV strategy and how it fits in with the majority beliefs of Goondiwindi residents.

"I think outside Goondiwindi most communities seems happy with our policy on Freedom camping and that it is adequately covered," GRC Mayor, Cr Graeme Scheu said.

"But in Goondiwindi itself there is a difference of opinion," he said.

Council has agreed to employ a consultant to look at the issue.

It would include a public meeting.

"I think the only way for-

ward is full community input," Cr Scheu said.

"Council has had this debate before but we now have Dave (Turner) and Lach (Brennan) who have joined us and they have their own views as well," he said.

E&C Development Officer Dave Hayward told Council the attraction of "long-drive" travellers to Goondiwindi was one of its tourism priorities.

Cr Rob Mackenzie asked whether it was "ok" for Councillors to attend the public meeting.

"Ok? I think it is imperative," Cr Scheu said.

"And I would hope everyone (Councillor) does."

However he said "just as important" was public perception.

"We have to distance ourselves from the meeting and let people have their say. We can't run it," he said.

Deputy-Mayor, Cr Rick Kearney urged all residents to attend.

"The GRC has received criticism that we aren't RV friendly but I don't think that is the case," he said.

"We do however have to have a balanced argument which is why I urge everyone to come along and give us their view.

"We have had people camp in sites around town and we've had people who have complained. Everyone has to be heard," he said.

A consultant to oversee the project could cost as much as \$12,000.



Newcastle set to join grey nomad trail

NEWCASTLE could soon become an RV friendly destination, with council this week voting to instigate the process for accreditation.

RV (recreational vehicle) travellers are estimated to spend \$100 a day while on the road, according to the Wickham-based Campervan

and Motorhome Club of Australia, but tend to bypass towns and cities where there are no facilities.

To become an RV friendly town or destination (the criteria differs slightly),

Newcastle needs to have at least one designated site for low-cost stays of up to 48

hours, preferably close to shops and amenities. It must also provide a dump point for emptying black and grey water tanks.

Greens councillor Michael Osborne, who put the motion to council, said Carrington, Stockton and Wallsend were all potential sites, subject to council evaluation.

Campervan and Motorhome Club CEO Richard Barwick said accreditation

would open up a new tourist market for Newcastle.

“When you provide a good location, it gives people the appetite to spend money,”

– **AMY DE LORE**



WHEEL LIFE: Cr Michael Osborne, left, and RV owners Bob and Jenneth Kamprad, of Charlestown, survey a potential stopover site at Carrington. **Picture: Simone De Peak**



Forrest Beach to trial RVs

Domanii Cameron

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A NEW tourism venture aimed to tap into North Queensland's travel market could put Forrest Beach back on the map.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council has approved a three-month trial overflow parking site for self-contained recreational vehicles at the seaside township.

Visitors will be able to stop at Lot 340 at Leichhardt Street and pay \$10 per vehicle, per night.

The council grounds were used as a caravan park years ago before closing down.

Forrest Beach Progress Association approached council regarding the site in 2015 and proposed to reinstate the short stay grounds.

While council owns the land, FBPA will be in charge of looking after the grounds.

The approval follows evidence that suggested there was insufficient tourist accommo-

modation for tourist type vehicles during the peak holiday period between April and October.

Anecdotal reports revealed a number of self-contained vehicles were parking in various road reserves and farm headlands around the shire.

Vehicles will be able to stay no longer than 48 hours at the trial site while FBPA would conduct a short survey of users each afternoon.

FBPA board member Carol Willoughby said it was fantastic news that would help to put Forrest Beach back on the map. "It's just wasted land so

we thought it would be a good idea," Mrs Willoughby said.

"Now we've got the new Hinchinbrook Way starting we really need to put Forrest Beach on the map."

Mayor Ramon Jayo said council would conduct both the trial and surveying properly. "There's no point having community meetings because nothing ever becomes of them and people are outspoken, we'll do surveys," Cr Jayo said.

"I am a bit confused by the messages that are coming out from Forrest Beach — a lot of people are yelling at me to get

things happening but then I end up getting slammed in the other direction."

Cr Jayo said council would receive a commission of 20 per cent on the fees collected from the site. Hinchinbrook Chamber of Commerce president Mary Brown said the park wasn't about tapping into a new market place. "It's not splitting what is already there, the self-contained traveller is a very specific market however the caravan park market is another market again," Ms Brown said.

"That was the differentiation, there's two different market places."

Ms Brown said there had been economic benefits from the RV site at Tyto.

"Chamber understands the concerns of the business community such as the caravanning business community but the survey results from the town RV trial demonstrated that something in the vicinity of 85 to 95 per cent of people that stayed were never going to stop in this community," she said. "What we're trying to do is grow our drive travel market."