



Campers stay, with conditions

By Sarah Vella

THE South Gippsland Shire Council will continue to allow free camping at the Franklin River Reserve, even after costs ballooned during the peak season.

An additional \$31,000 was spent on the site in 2015/16 compared to the previous year, due to a marked increase in usage of the area.

Most of the extra money was spent maintaining the existing toilet block and on the management of the reserve's trees, which were damaged by compaction and firewood collection.

Rachel Brown from the Toora Tourist Park is against free camping at the reserve, due to its impact on her business.

Ms Brown said the existing caravan parks could handle the number of people using the free area, however acknowledged some campers would simply not pay for camping sites.

"Why should ratepayers subsidise free campers to the tune of \$50,000 per year? It may be free to users but it is not free for the ratepayers," she said.

"The free camping area at the Franklin River Reserve is a threat to my business."

While council will continue to allow free camping, it will no longer provide \$180,000 in the budget to replace the amenities block.

Instead, it will focus spending on fencing, gates and bollards to limit access and define camping areas.

It will also review the levels of services at the reserve in conjunction with a review of the council's RV strategy and put up additional signage which mentions the local caravan parks.

Councillor Mohya Davies said it was difficult to find the correct balance when deciding what to do with the reserve.

"It was a fine line balancing what was appropriate (for the reserve), but I believe this might help resolve some of the issues," she said.

Cr Lorraine Brunt said the area had become a bit of a "free for all" and questioned the cost of it to ratepayers.

She said restricting people to a 48 hour stay and not allowing campfires or solid fuel barbecues should reduce usage rates and in turn reduce damage to the reserve.

"It has created a few problems, but I think what we have put forward will make it less attractive than it was," she said.

Cr Nigel Hutchinson-Brooks said there is a lack of tourism infrastructure in the shire and compared to other councils, has very few free camping spots.

"I'd like to see more. We have got to have a broad range of offerings (for tourists) around the shire," he said.



Franklin fix up: South Gippsland Shire staff was hard at it earlier this year at the Franklin River Reserve working on drainage improvements.



Camping campaign

GETTING back to nature and embracing adventure forms the backbone of a new emotive promo launched by the Caravan and Camping Industry Association (CCIA) NSW this week.

Airing from today and running until 20 Aug, the campaign will appear on TV and digital channels across the state - view it **HERE**.

“This campaign recognises the value of the great outdoors and all of the positive feelings and fun it engenders, encouraging people to get out & explore the beautiful sites available in holiday parks throughout NSW,” CCIA NSW ceo Lyndel Gray said yesterday.

Concurrently, the CCIA has unveiled a new consumer-facing website from which over 400 holiday parks in the state can be uncovered, ranging from basic tent sites to luxury cabins.

See caravan-camping.com.au.



RV town now in action

NANANGO is now officially a friendly town for visiting grey nomads, after The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia declared the town RV friendly.

To qualify for the program, towns must have access to a shopping area, low-cost overnight parking for self-contained vehicles and access to portable water and a free dump point.

Councillor Roz Frohloff said Nanango had fully equipped caravan parks that catered to the needs of visitors in motorhomes.

“The town also supports RVs by providing specially allocated parking for visitors at the Energy Centre and those wanting to shop in the CBD,” she said.

Mayor Keith Campbell said Nanango had the opportunity to promote the whole of the South Burnett following the declaration.

“Through a combination of social media and word of mouth RV tourists will quickly let their fellow travellers know what a great place Nanango is to visit and experience what it is that makes this town unique,” Cr Campbell said.



Nobby camping meeting

A meeting regarding the Nobby Rest Stop will be held this Friday in Nobby at Rudd's Pub, starting at 9.30am.

This will be a follow-up informal meeting regarding the Rest Stop to submit to Toowoomba Regional Council community suggestions that were previously discussed at the last meeting.

Nobby locals are keen to see the retention of the area adjacent to the railway line, as a site for recreational vehicle owners to stay

overnight.

The previous meeting noted the importance of finding a way to establish a more formal facility and the economic benefits it would continue to provide to the town and area.

For further information contact Community Liaison Officer for Greenmount and Clifton Service Centres Meghan Cox on 131 872.