



RV parks invitation rejected

YORKE Peninsula Council has rejected an invitation to submit an expression of interest to the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia for establishing specific RV parks in the region.

The CMCA proposal involved developing a series of member-only RV parks either on existing camping grounds or on land not currently in use.

"These RV parks would be intended specifically for self-contained RVs as low-cost, no-frills accommodation throughout

the Yorke Peninsula region," YPC director of corporate and community services David Harding said.

This project doesn't have the support of state or national caravanning organisations.

Concern with the proposal led to the development of the Community Welcomes Recreational Vehicles initiative, designed to embrace these travellers whilst not affecting current caravan park occupancy rates.



Free and easy

Campers flock to Henty Park

BEN FRASER

SIX months after Portland officially became an RV (Recreation Vehicle) Friendly Town, the first wave of summer holiday travellers have meandered through the city.

The campers have packed out caravan parks and, for the first time, taken advantage of Henty Park's free camping site.

Even on a Wednesday afternoon, 12 RVs and caravans were arranged in a bedraggled circle behind the Portland Cable Tram depot.

Located less than 500m from the beach, Henty Park is one of three RV-friendly free camping sites controlled by the Glenelg Shire, with the Hunter St East site in Heywood and the Ess Lagoon campground on McPherson St, Casterton.

Rules vary from place to place, but at Henty Park the campers have a maximum stay of 72 hours.

According to the *Herald Sun*, Victoria has seen a 47% increase in nights spent free camping, and along with overnight stays at caravan parks, injects \$12 billion into local economies.

First-time visitor to Portland, Tony Bernard of Newcastle, was full of praise for the Henty Park free

camping site, citing the location as a major advantage.

"It's a really nice spot – absolutely," Mr Bernard said.

"There's plenty to do in town; we've been shopping, checked out the Powerhouse Museum, visited the light house.

"From what I have seen, Portland is very friendly."

Mr Bernard has spent the past three weeks in the shire, with the majority of time spent at the State Government-controlled Sawpit Campground in Narrawong.

Mr Bernard adheres to the unofficial free campers' mantra, making sure to spend money in places where you save money on camping fees.

"I spent about \$300 on fuel and groceries this morning, and I'm yet to buy some fresh meat, so that's probably \$400-450 in the two days I've been here.

"I know another guy here just spent \$300 on fuel.

"You always spend money in town; if everyone did that there'd be a lot of money injected into the town through free camping."

Neighbouring Mr Bernard is retired couple Maureen and Shane Denney, who are slowly travelling from Roseworthy, Adelaide, to Tasmania for a three-month trip.

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FULL of praise: Recreation Vehicle camper Tony Bernard loves the free camping site at Henty Park, and has made sure to return the favour buying supplies and visiting tourist attractions during his stay.

Picture: JOSH NASH 170104jn16

Free and easy

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The couple travel Australia in a converted bus that Mr Denney spent three years renovating.

“We’ve got everything we’d ever want; we can set up camp anywhere,” Mr Denney said.

“We actually heard about this site at the Nelson Information Centre.

“We’re on pensions now, so free camping makes the experience cheaper.”

Interestingly, Mr Denney said they will be moving on to a paid camping site in Portland to wash their clothes before travelling east along the coast.

Glenelg Shire mayor Anita Rank said since the launch of the RV Friendly space at Henty Park, there have been a number of positive outcomes to the shire.

“Portland is the only accredited RV Friendly Town on the coast west of Melbourne,” Cr Rank said.

“This status provides our shire with access to one of the fastest growing tourism groups in Australia who recognise Portland as a must-see destination because of this free camping availability.

“Portland is also on the Campervan Motorhome Club of Australia touring map, providing our town with access to its membership base of more than 66,000 RV travellers.

“Every time an RV traveller arrives in our community, they buy food and supplies from our retailers, they support our local tourism operators which, in turn, create and support local jobs.”

However not everyone is happy with the free camping site at Henty Park.

In a Letter to the Editor that appeared in the *Portland Observer* in September, 2016, Portland and Heywood holiday park and fuel business owner Nick Alexander questioned the Shire’s decision to allow RV campers to stay at Henty Park for free.

“Why are we charging recreational fishermen \$10 a day to park their boat trailer while permitting self contained recreational vehicles to free camp?” Mr Alexander wrote.

“We know from media reports that recreational fishing brings in \$8,000,000 a year to our shire.

“Free camping would need to average 220 free campers a night (using CMCA data of \$100 per day) to achieve the same benefit.”

Portland Tourist Association president Todd Knight said while it is fantastic to see more people are coming to the region and staying for free, it is a delicate balancing act to ensure the holiday parks remain viable too.

“The Portland Tourist Association worked closely with the Glenelg Shire Council to become a RV Friendly Town,” Mr Knight said.

“It’s fantastic to see new people come to Portland and enjoy what we have to offer.

“It’s now up to the accommodation providers to put their best foot forward and market their parks to be the best they can and stand out from the rest.

“If you offer the right services, like laundry services, then you will attract those free campers.

“It’s a challenging game.”

Narrawong camping: PAGES 4-5



Portland Observer, Portland VIC

06 Jan 2017, by Ben Fraser

General News, page 1 - 642.00 cm²

Regional - circulation 2,793 (M-W-F--)

ID 709547200

BRIEF CMCA-AUST INDEX 1.2



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EN route to Tasmania, Maureen and Shane Denney stopped by Portland to stay at both free and paid camping sites.

Picture: JOSH NASH 170104jn18



Happy campers bring big business

BUSINESSES in the Liverpool Plains Shire Council (LPSC) will benefit from two industry workshops to be conducted by the Australian Caravan Club (ACC) with the local business community at Quirindi and Spring Ridge later this month.

“The workshops will focus on many topics including the economic benefits that can be gained by local businesses from catering to the needs

of the RV traveller, how to engage with RVers, how to encourage RVers to visit, and opportunities to access the growing RV community,” ACC Deputy Chairman Tom Smith said.

The workshops will be held at Racecourse Dining Room, Quirindi and Spring Ridge Hall, on January 24 and 25 from 5:30pm.

“The ACC is now developing further regional options within the Club’s

Town Support Program and is prepared to work with any local authority or business community wishing to develop a recreational vehicle strategy,” Mr Smith said.

“Members of the ACC Policy, Advocacy and Town Support Committee plus ACC Board Members will be conduct the seminars.”

Anyone wanting to attend should contact the LPSC for more information.