



# Would you really want to camp here?

TOURISTS will be able to enjoy these uninterrupted views of the Zephyr St causeway if a proposal to build a Stop and Shop caravan and campervan site in the busy street is approved by Council.

The area is one of four proposed sites for a new Stop and Shop, an initiative that Council launched earlier this year to encourage RV travellers passing through the region to make a purchase at a local business to the value of at least \$10 and use the receipt from their spendings as a ticket to stay overnight for free in one of these designated sites.

But not everyone is happy about the idea.

Local paramedic Warren Pickering lives in Zephyr St, and solicitor Don Gayler's practice is based almost directly opposite the vacant area identified by Council.

Both men have raised concerns about the suitability of the street for a Stop and Shop



**Solicitor Don Gayler and paramedic Warren Pickering don't see the same street-appeal the Council do at the proposed Stop and Shop site in Zephyr St, Scarness.**

site, including the lack of toilets and running water, issues with flooding from the drain during storms and king tides, the impact that such a development would have on traffic flow through the busy street, and whether the money spent by this group of RV travellers would offset the cost of building the site in the first place.

The Indy put these

concerns to Councillor Stuart Taylor, whose portfolio encompasses Tourism and Marketing, and who was a driving force behind the initiative.

"The purpose of the Stop and Shop concept is to encourage the RV traveller to engage with the region through a 20hr stop over incentive once they have spent money in the region," he said in a statement to

the Indy.

"It is already proving to be very successful with the average spend in region being over \$115."

Councillor Taylor said a decision on the proposal to construct a Stop and Shop site in Zephyr St would not be made until Council had reviewed public comment on proposal, which closed earlier this month.



# Shire stops trial

**The proposed short-term overnight parking trial (STOP) for recreational vehicles (RV) at Jemmys Point, Lakes Entrance, will not go ahead, East Gippsland Shire Council has revealed.**

A trial was to start following community consultation, however council requested further investigation by its staff.

Officers looked into the existence of free RV parking in other Victorian and New South Wales' shires and the policy positions taken by other shires.

Shire mayor, Cr Peter Neal, said the research showed while there were a number of 'RV Friendly Towns' throughout Victoria, not many are in key visitor destinations.

"There are 38 Victorian towns formally endorsed as 'RV Friendly Towns' by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia. Absent from the list are towns such as those along the Great Ocean Road and around Port Phillip Bay," Cr Neal said.

"Some Councils were also looking to remove towns from the list as they adopt an RV policy.

"We adopted a Recreational Vehicle Development Plan Framework in 2010, which has resulted in enhanced or new facilities to cater for the RV market. East Gippsland Shire has

four free overnight parking locations for RVs; Genoa, Swift's Creek, Omeo and Metung," Cr Neal said.

"Although we will not be proceeding with the trial at Jemmys Point, our objectives for the RV market remain unchanged.

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## Commercial options

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"That is, to encourage visitors to the region and to ensure there is no illegal camping on the foreshore at Lakes Entrance.

"Where illegal camping is identified, our community laws officers will continue to advise RV owners of the commercial options available for overnight or longer stays in Lakes Entrance, and also free locations such as Metung, Burnt Bridge and Log Crossing."

To help the RV community to identify where camping is permitted, an audit will be undertaken of existing signs on public land and car parks across the shire to ensure it meets the needs of the RV community.

"Council officers will work with other public land managers to identify suitable sites to support the RV market visiting Lakes Entrance. They will also engage with caravan park owners to determine their capacity and willingness to support RVs and develop promotional tools to attract RVs to their businesses," Cr Neal said.

The free camping topic has been a regular agenda item for the Lakes Entrance Action and Development Association, and the idea was a cause for concern among local caravan park operators, given their high representation in the area.



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# Tents, swags 'driven' off park

## COUNCIL

BY ELLA SMITH

A HOMELESS man forced off Wilks Park after an eight-year stint has slammed council for targeting people in tents and turning a blind eye to motor homes because they "look better and appear to spend more money in town."

But council have denied the claims, adding any fines issued always followed verbal warnings to move on.

As the war wages on between caravan park owners, who claim council rangers don't effectively regulate the site, homeless man Chris Matthews, 65, has renewed calls to change council's legislation that limits Wilks Park to self-contained accommodation.

Mr Matthews camped in a tent at Wilks Park for eight years before council introduced in 2013 legislation to enforce a 72-hour limit on stays and to limit its use to those only with self-contained accommodation,

such as caravans and motor homes.

"People who camp there in tents are the only ones who have fines there," Mr Matthews said.

"Because we can't look as flash as the other people, we're treated like dogs."

Mr Matthews hosed down arguments that visiting grey nomads who stayed in campervans at Wilks Park, injected

hefty amounts of money into the local economy.

"Blimey Jim, they might look better than me, they might look flasher than me, but they don't spend near as much money in town as me," he said. "I spend every cent in this town."

Mr Thomas hasn't lived in a house since his Newcastle rental apartment was broken into and ransacked 15 years ago.

"Some people just can't live in houses," he said. "That's why I live like this because I'm safer."

A council spokesman confirmed rangers always issued

verbal warning to move on before issuing fines when enforcing the 72-hour stay rule and that only "a small number of fines" had been issued since creating the "Primitive Camping Ground" in 2013.

"Fines that have been issued have been to people in tents and sleeping in vehicles that have ignored verbal warnings or requests to move on," the spokesman said.

"Staff do not turn a blind eye to people in mobile homes and caravans and if staff suspect the caravan is not self-contained the first action is to request them to move on or face the threat of a fine if they remain.

"No fines were issued prior to 2013 due to the fact that the camping area had no rules and regulations regarding its use."



# Motorhome and campervan event drives spending in city

## ■ Lisa Morrison

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's 30th National Rally rolled out of Albany yesterday, leaving significant economic stimulation in its wake.

The CMCA estimates the event, which involved more than 800 campervans and motorhomes based at Centennial Oval for eight days, typically generates upwards of \$1.5 million for the host city.

Cameron Caravans Albany owner Michael Cameron had been eagerly anticipating the event.

"It has been a boon for our business," he said.

"We started planning for it two years ago. We have been very busy (and) bought more stock into town and added more freight to boost items we have sold out of."

Mr Cameron said a stall in the

trade display section at the rally base from October 26 to November 1 had been beneficial.

"We were inundated," he said.

"They were two and three deep looking at accessories for their stay - it was like having another shop for the week.

"We had hundreds of sales just through the (rally) store and were ringing work continuously to get them to bring specialty parts down to us."

Mr Cameron said pop-up buckets, 12-volt kettles and hot water system anodes, ranging from \$20 to \$100, were in high demand, while a \$2500 diesel heater was the biggest sale during the rally.

He said the other Albany businesses had reaped financial benefits from visitors.

"They all need fuel, they all need food, they all go into town for

morning tea or coffee or lunch," he said.

"They are tourists and talk to other tourists on the road and I have heard Albany has become a main part of their travel route.

"We are seeing more and more caravans coming to Albany. Where previously they would head to Kalgoorlie, they are coming here after the publicity of the Anzac centenary. Albany has a buzz about it at the moment and because of that more and more tourists are adding it to their list of must-see destinations."



**COUNCIL**

# We need RVers

## Maryborough could be grey nomad paradise

HOW LONG will it take Fraser Coast Regional Council to realise that they are missing a great opportunity?

How hard can it be for the Fraser Coast Regional Council to create RV friendly status for Maryborough and bring this lucrative tourist trade to Maryborough?

Jack Dempsey is running for Mayor in Bundaberg next year by pushing for an RV Superpark there.

We need to jump on this before it becomes another missed opportunity for Maryborough and the Fraser Coast region.

Maryborough has the expertise and businesses to allow us to go one step further and claim "RV Capital of Australia" status, benefiting not only the retail and tourism sector but also our servicing and light manufacturing economy.

All we need is to allow RVs to park in central areas of the city for a small fee, "not free".

The FCRC says it wants to encourage RVs into Maryborough but a camping strategy that was supposed to lure them into the city allowed for only four RV overnight sites in Alan & June Brown car park.



**A READER calls for support to bring RVs to the Fraser Coast region as it would boost the local economy.**

PHOTO: ALISTAIR BRIGHTMAN

That will hardly create a ripple in our economy; nor will it lead to the light industry spin-off we can get from servicing the industry. We need a tidal wave, not a ripple.

We should also change the policy of making visitors spend something and then walk to the Visitors Information Centre to show a docket before they are allowed to park overnight. Definitely not welcoming.

Personally I would rather pay the \$10 to the VIC and

wander around this beautiful city.

These guys are now the wealthiest sector of the domestic tourism market and can quite easily just drive straight past – as they do now – if we don't welcome them.

Once we are on the RV map, Maryborough will have the opportunity to grow regional tourism and services industry.

As they say, "A rising tide lifts all boats."

**DARRYL GLEICH**  
 Division 4 Candidate