



Nightly fees adopted in new Berri Barmera camping policy

By ALEXANDRA LOKAN

Berri Barmera councillors recently approved a camping policy for the district after months of wrangling over its terms.

A camping, caravanning and recreational vehicle (RV) policy – which will see a minimum nightly charge of \$5 apply to campers in RVs and caravans but exclude campers in tents – was adopted in December after changes were made to the draft in November.

The policy was put to public consultation in March and has been tabled and resurrected by elected members a number of times while they sought to make amendments.

A formal motion to stop debate on the policy and force a vote saw the policy adopted in a 5-3 breakdown at council's ordinary monthly meeting on Tuesday night.

The minimum nightly charge and exemp-

Council considers \$10 Martin Bend fee

Berri Barmera Council is yet to act on a motion to charge \$10 per night at popular Berri campsite Martin Bend.

The motion, raised by councillor Trevor Chapple in October, was adjourned in November and acciden-

tally left off the agenda for December's ordinary council meeting. The matter will be on the agenda for this month's meeting but will need to be resurrected via a motion to bring it back to the table for discussion.

Councillor Andrew Kassebaum said he opposed a policy which excluded campers from paying for use of council campsites.

tion for campers in tents continued to be a point of difference between councillors, but environmental services manager Gary Brinkworth told councillors at Tuesday's meeting that it could be revised at any time.

Councillor Andrew Kassebaum said he opposed a policy which excluded campers from paying for use of council campsites.

"If we're happy to be charging it should be applicable to everyone," he said. "By doing what we've done no campers are going to be charged at all."

Cr Mike Fuller urged caution when it came to calculating rates for individual sites. "People are not coming into the town to

pay exorbitant rates," he said.

"We need camping

"We're trying to attract travellers into our towns (because) the tourists are driving past towns (that) don't have what they are looking for."

Mayor Peter Hunt said he believed it was the right time to begin charging, as many other councils now do.

"Five dollars is a start," he said.

"It's better than nothing."

"The game has changed so much – these caravans have everything in them."

"Back in the day they needed toilets and showers, but now they have everything on board."

The camping policy will be used as an overarching document to help council classify campsites in terms of amenities offered, duration of stay and any nightly costs on an individual basis.

● How The Murray Pioneer reported the story on January 3, 2014.



Spotlight on dodgy fuel prices in the new year

Martin Bend campers happy to pay

By ALEXANDRA LOKAN

Berri Barmera Council says campers at Martin Bend have been adhering to a new \$5 nightly charge in line with its new camping policy.

From July 1, campers have been charged the fee per site, payable via an honesty box in front of the caretaker's home.

Council resolved to charge an overnight fee for the site to help pay for its maintenance while a new district camping policy was created.

Environmental services manager Gary Brinkworth said while the exact amount raised from the campsite in the first three weeks is unknown, campers had been following the new policy.

"We have not collated the amounts yet from the first few weeks of collection," he said.

"(But) our general inspector has been patrolling the area

and talking to people (and) all have paid so far."

Mr Brinkworth said several factors contributed to costs in maintaining Martin Bend.

"The costs attributed to Martin Bend include the maintenance of the grounds, barbecues, seating and shelters, roads, a toilet and effluent system, caretaker's residence, bin collection and provision of new or upgraded infrastructure," he said.

Council's camping, caravanning and recreational vehicle (RV) policy, enacted in December, allows for a minimum nightly charge at district campsites of \$5 per night.

Council will next introduce a \$5 nightly fee at the new RV park at Barmera's Bruce Oval, set to begin in the near future.

An honesty box implemented by the District Council of Loxton Waikerie (DCLW) last November at its Moorook camping ground raised almost \$16,000 in about eight months.



Camping at Martin Bend now costs \$5 per night per site under the Berri Barmera Council's new camping policy. Council said campers have responded well to the change.

PHOTO: Will Slee



Campers deal out ultimatum

**SOPHIE
KESTEVEN**



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CAMPERS say they will leave Fletcher Creek and won't return following the implementation of a four week time limit by the Charters Towers Regional Council on the free camping site.

The idea to have maximum lengths of stay on Fletcher Creek and Macrossan campgrounds was put forward by councillors in November last year, but the rules didn't come into play until this month.

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Unhappy campers take leave of Fletcher Creek

From page 1

THE signs were erected at the Fletcher Creek campgrounds on July 14 and say campers can stay for a maximum period of four weeks and cannot return until at least two months later.

Campers Peter and Connie Kersten have travelled from Victoria to stay at Fletcher Creek and have

stayed there in their caravan for the last two and a half months.

They said since the signs were put up by the Council, 42 vans have left.

"We travel from Victoria to get away from the cold and we would like to stay longer than four weeks," Mrs Kersten said.

Mr Kersten said between themselves and two other couples they

have spent between \$12,000-\$13,000 in Charters Towers.

"That's all on groceries, chainsaws, new fridges, solar panels, fuel, alcohol, lunch, chemist, gas and everything," he said.

"If we get pushed out, we are not coming back. We care about what it's going to do to all the shops. It's going to close them down."

Mrs Kersten said CTRC Mayor



Frank Beveridge and CEO Mark Crawley went to Fletcher Creek last Monday for a meeting with the campers.

“Around 30-40 people said they would like to stay longer than a month,” she said.

“The Mayor actually turned around and said what they wanted us to do, which is absolute stupidity.

“They want us to go to a caravan park, and if they can’t get into that one go into the next one, and if you can’t get into any of those three you go to the showgrounds.”

Ms Kersten said they didn’t want any of it, as they prefer staying at Fletcher Creek because it’s peaceful and there is lots of space.

“We want to know what is the difference in price in us staying there for four weeks or four months? Because the trucks come through twice a week at the moment for the bins,” she said.

“A simple solution I put to them, is that if money is the issue, we are quite happy when we come through Charters Towers to have a permit of \$100-150 per month.”

Camper Jen Hawkins and her husband have been travelling up the east coast in a caravan for the last couple of months and recently stayed at Fletcher Creek.

“Every free camping area is packed and the story is the same. They cannot afford to stay in caravan parks every night. Who has that type of money? Not me,” she said.

Council CEO Mark Crawley said it costs \$100,000 a year for council staff to service Fletcher Creek.

“You have people in town here who are ratepayers and are paying for these guys to stay out there for free,” he said.

“(A limit is needed) because it costs money to do the servicing of the bins and servicing of the dump point.

“We approached the CMCA (Campervan Motorhome Club Australia) and got some guidance.

“They said two weeks is probably long enough, so we went four

weeks and if people really want to stay longer they can write to the Council.”

“We went out there on Monday and met with the people.

“Ninety-eight per cent of the people that the ranger had spoken to, said four weeks is plenty of time, so there is probably only about two per cent of people there would stay longer than four weeks.”

In regards to policing the four week time limit, Mr Crawley said they wouldn’t be sending a ranger out there everyday as it costs money.

“Some of them might get five or six weeks, it depends on when we can get the rangers out.”

Mr Crawley said even if there was a decline in tourism within the area next year, the council was unlikely to reconsider the four week limit.

“The majority of people who are out there would be happy with four weeks,” he said.

“If you want to stay longer than the four weeks all you have to do is write us a letter before you come and we can give you a permit to stay longer.

“So I can’t see why they are jumping up and down around the four week time frame. I think it is an overreaction.”

CTRC Mayor Frank Beveridge said to leave Fletcher Creek as an unmanaged site was not an option and the Council needed to bring some rules and regulations into play.

“We put the time period in because there have been people using it as a long-term residence, he said.

“But I would make the point that 99 per cent of grey nomads up there look after their campsites and do the right thing.”

Cr Beveridge said if the Council charged a permit fee then it would be a commercial operation and in competition with the caravan parks in town.

Regardless, he said they would still present the idea to the councillors and see what their thoughts were on the issue.

— SOPHIE KESTEVEN



Connie and Peter Kersten said they are unhappy with the four week maximum stay at Fletcher Creek that council has imposed. Picture: SOPHIE KESTEVEN



Caravan and motor home owners will now pay \$5 per stay to use camping facilities and connect to a power supply at Lyrup's ss Ellen Park.

PHOTO: Will Slee

By MELISSA KEOGH

Caravan and motor home owners will be charged \$5 per stay at Lyrup's ss Ellen Park after the local council implemented a new policy last week.

The fee, to be paid via a collection box located near the toilet facilities, will help the Renmark Paringa Council cover costs of the free power supply currently avail-

able.

For the past 12 months, the council has implemented a time limit of no more than 72 hours at the camping ground.

At council's general monthly meeting last week, director of corporate and community services Nathan Haynes said about 120 surveys were sent to Lyrup residents to gain feedback on the proposed fee and time limit.

"About 30 responses were

received," he said. "We had overwhelming support for the provision of power, but not free of charge."

Renmark Paringa Mayor Neil Martinson said he also surveyed patrons during a visit to the Lyrup Club and found that the "majority of people were happy with a donation system".

"There is one particular person who has been there (ss Ellen Park) for 17 days,"



he said. "But I think we're going to have to trust them. I'm hoping people will do what they're asked to do."

Chief executive officer Tony Siviour said the free power supply had cost council about \$400 from January 2014 to April 2014.

"The majority of the people (surveyed) can see the benefit for Lyrup," he said.

"Once we implement it, we'll probably monitor the park a little bit harder to start with because we want to get the message out there."

Mr Siviour noted a similar policy recently introduced at a Moorook camping ground.

"The same thing at Moorook seems to be working quite well," he said.

Lyrup resident Susan Taylor recently told the *Pioneer* she was "very opposed" to caravan and motor home owners staying at ss Ellen Park.

"I believe there are suffi-

cient caravan parks and facilities in the Riverland and this is taking business that should be directed to them," she said.

"These people are self-sufficient and may buy the odd bread or milk supplies from the local shop or an odd meal or two at the Lyrup Club.

"But I do not believe that this is sufficient to cover the costs to the ratepayers."

The camping policy at ss Ellen Park joins similar implementations at camping grounds across the Riverland, including Martin Bend, Berri.

To charge or not

During a recent survey conducted by the Renmark Paringa Council, Lyrup residents offered their opinions on the 72-hour time limit and \$5 per stay fee at ss Ellen Park.

"I now notice that 'bongo vans' are now staying there – usually backpackers. When backpackers can get something for nothing they won't leave!" – Noelene

"It (72 hours) gives the visitors enough time to have a good look around." - Anonymous

"Since the free power has been installed there has been a considerable increase in RVs coming into the area and some overstay the three-day limit." - Ken and Rhyl.

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A \$5 fee was also recently introduced by Berri Barmera Council at Martin Bend (The *Pioneer*, 25/7/14).



HITTING THE ROAD: Families overtaking grey nomads in mobile holidays

Caravanning rolls along

MORE Aussies are hitting the road on a caravanning and camping holiday.

Research released by the Caravan Industry Association of Australia has highlighted the continued growth and strength of caravan and camping nationally.

The number of caravan registrations has risen at a higher rate than any other vehicle type in the past two years, and research into the number of registered RVs or motorhomes in Australia shows a jump year on year of 5%.

In 2013, the number of registered RVs in Australia was 528,869, jumping from 502,025 the previous year. Of these registered vehicles, 474,783 were towed product (caravans, camper trailers, tent trailers, and other towed RVs) and 54,103 were motorised (motorhome or campervan).

RV production statistics for May this year were up 7.4% since May, 2013.

They also show the highest towables production in at least six years and the highest combined total since March, 2011.

Caravanning and camping accounts for \$7 billion of expenditure annually in Australia, representing more than 60 million

visitor nights.

These numbers are not solely the product of the Grey Nomad market, though these consumers remain significant.

Industry data attributes this upswing to younger families who are getting into the caravanning and camping spirit.

Tourism Research Australia said the largest consumer group in the industry was made up of 35 to 49-year-olds, who accounted for about half of travel in the sector.

Alliance Strategic Research found the key current user group

was 35 to 49-year-olds, and particularly families with children.

Caravan Industry Association of Australia chairman Mark Lindsay was optimistic about the future of caravanning and camping in Australia.

“Every year we see more and more people getting involved and seeing the sensational sights Australia has to offer,” Mr Lindsay said.

“Whether they’re doing a big trip in a caravan or motorhome or just getting away for the weekend, Aussie families are making the most of the great outdoors,” he said.

Mr Lindsay said he saw a trend emerging of multi-generational families camping together, or grandparents taking the grandkids for a week away.

“Gramping is a phenomenon we’re seeing a lot of recently,” he said.

 **Mark Lindsay**
Aussie families
are making the most of
the great outdoors



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

- 67.8 million site nights were spent in the caravanning and camping sector in 2012, with 45.3 million (67%) in a caravan holiday park with more than 40 sites
- Expenditure by caravanning and camping consumers is about \$7 billion annually
- 90% of all site nights are in regional Australia
- 90% of caravanning and camping activity is undertaken by Australian domestic travellers
- The largest user group is 35-49-year-olds, who do about half of all travel in the sector

PHOTO: THINK STOCK



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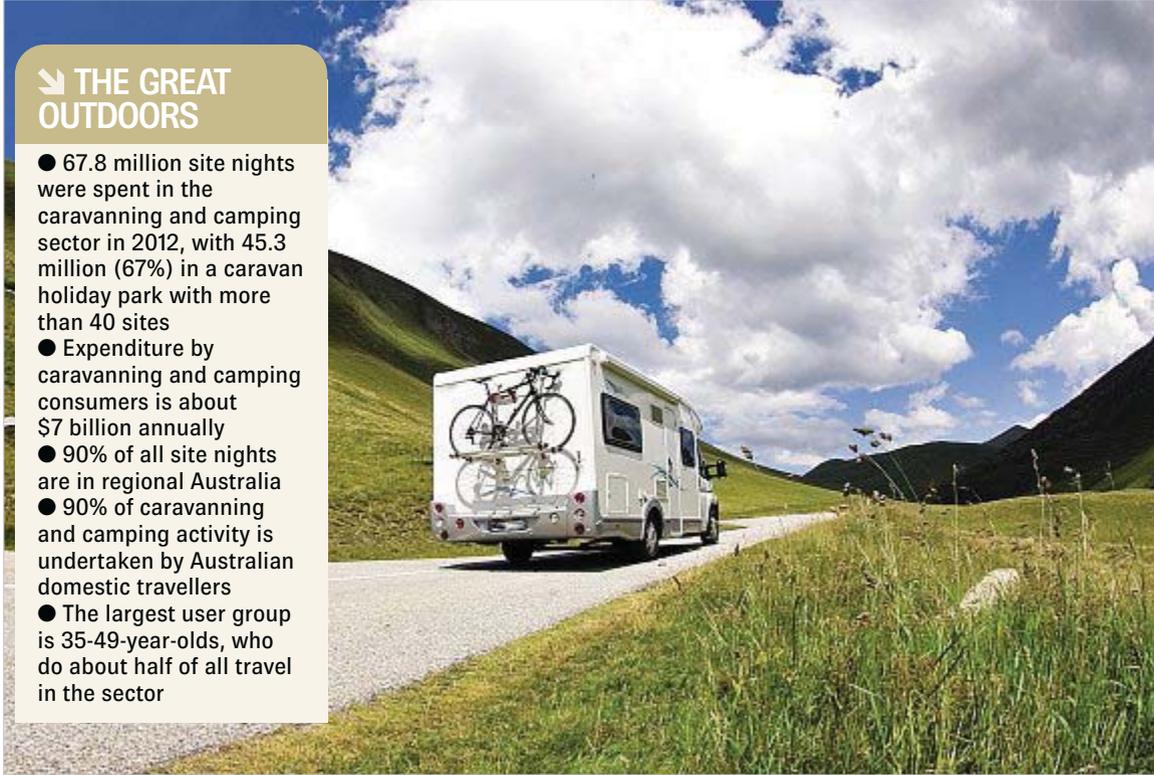


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PHOTO: JHINK STUCK



Investigation to continue into free camping issues

Cobar Shire Council is continuing to investigate the impacts and legality of free camping in the shire.

In a report submitted to last Thursday's council meeting, general manager Gary Woodman said council is looking into issues including the legality of unregulated free camping, including information on the use of other crown reserves and locations within Cobar Shire, and how special events affect the rules.

The matter is following on from discussions at the June council meeting council on unregulated free camping in the Cobar shire and the effects on the Cobar Caravan Park.

At council's committee meeting earlier this month local businessman Ian Settree spoke on the issue and was in favour of 'freedom camping'.

"Council officers have undertaken extensive investigations on the issues including analysing all crown reserves and other locations where camping is occurring or not with appropriate determination whether camping is allowed together with relevant planning zone information," Mr Woodman said.

He said the necessary report is only in draft stage and proper legal analysis of the planning zone information needs to be undertaken before the final report can be submitted.

Mr Woodman said he does not expect the report will be finalised until at least the August ordinary council meeting.