



Travellin' man

HAPPY TRAILS: Far North Nomads' member Alan Carroll, from Mareeba, instigated Christmas in July at Davies Park 17 years ago. In the past week more than 260 motorhomes and caravans came to town, a sure sign of Mr Carroll's foresightedness.
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Community benefits from Nomads' Christmas

Kylie Reghenzani

MAREEBA resident Alan Carroll is eager to be a nomad again.

With 265 motorhomes of all shapes and sizes converging at Davies Park for the annual Christmas in July last weekend, Mr Carroll is getting itchy feet to dust the cobwebs from his own "home on wheels".

The 71 year old and his wife, Robyn, have been travelling overseas after doing their stint caravanning across the country for 17 years.

"We've been up and down and

through the middle of Australia and around the country," Mr Carroll said. "We're a bit broke now (from going overseas) so we will have to get back into it and see more of our own backyard."

The Far North Nomads' life member was the instigator of the 17th annual event which was first

held at Julatten in 1997 with 67 motorhomes.

Grey nomads bring about \$150,000 a week to the Mareeba economy.

They spend about \$500 each week including fuel and food.

Last weekend the event raised \$8000 with funds going to State Emergency Service, the Mayor's Christmas Appeal and the rest of the funds are split between various charities.

The event has grown and is supported by the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia. It is held at Davies Park to accommodate increasing numbers.

"I didn't expect it to last five years let alone 17," Mr Carroll said.



“For a few years we’ve had more than 300 motorhomes at the park.

“We’ve had a lot of first-timers these previous years and families too, not just the older generations.

“A lot of people come from

Tasmania and Western Australia to escape the cold weather.”

Mr Carroll said Mareeba’s Christmas in July had joined the “rally circuit” and economically, it had paid off for the town.

“If you want to caravan around Australia this is the time to go,” he said. “The nomads love coming here and we get great support from Mareeba Shire Council.

“People are coming up as early as May and staying until August.”

Kerribee Park Rodeo Grounds is a sea of motorhomes too, as are various caravan parks across the district.

Nomads’ president and event co-ordinator Millie Virtue has been on the road for the past 11 months.

He has been a club member club for 11 years and travels solo in his Fifth Wheeler decked out with everything he needs to be on the road. “I love coming to Mareeba and travelling is something I enjoy,”

Mr Virtue said.

“You can stop somewhere in a motorhome and you’ll be sure someone will pull up beside you.

“I enjoy the camaraderie.”

Mayor Tom Gilmore said council welcomed the nomads, an event not to be underestimated.

“Mareeba has a great reputation with the travelling public,” Cr Gilmore said. “Our town is recognised from Cape Leeuwin to the tip of Cape York.”

Council had increased the number of longer parking bays near Coles supermarket for motorhomes so they can park their vans close to town without having to take up parking spaces.

“It’s not just about Christmas in July,” Cr Gilmore said.

“Nomads make a significant contribution and I can’t think of anything better.

“We welcome them with open arms.”



At Davies Park for "Christmas" were Des Lane, Len Hine, Millie Virtue and Alan Carroll.

Picture: Kylie Reghenzani