



RV DOLLARS GO BEGGING

DENIS PETERS



HAMILTON is missing out on big dollars for its commercial sector by failing to actively pursue the vibrant recreational vehicle (RV) market, proponents of the idea claim.

Unlike neighbouring Glenelg Shire, which has recently applied for formal accreditation for sites in Portland, Heywood and Casterton, Southern Grampians has not aggressively sought to grab its share of the market.

Accreditation with the "Grey Nomads" umbrella group, the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA), alerts its 66,000 members to

the presence of facilities such as free camp sites and free waste dump sites in the location.

While Southern Grampians Mayor Peter Dark says any proposal to attract RV trade is welcome before council ... and there currently is none ... he maintains sufficient facilities already exist in the city and that new dump sites would be a significant cost.

RV travellers are estimated to each spend on average more than \$500 a week in towns they visit, on products such as fuel, food, medicines, vehicle maintenance and tourism activities.

Former Hamilton councillor and seasoned Grey Nomad, Tiger Wettenhall, believes Hamilton is ideally located to draw in RV travellers but is missing out by failing to be overtly welcoming and by not having dedicated facilities.

"It's a focal point from three or four different directions," he said.

"You get the Great Ocean Rd people coming up, then you've got the interstate travellers and we're right in the middle in between Melbourne and Adelaide, and you're between Horsham and Portland.

"But in Hamilton, nothing jumps out at you like it does in a lot of other towns."

He said the city needed signage that was catchy and welcoming to caravanners.

"It's a big market. We go away for about 13 weeks every year and we spend a bloody lot of money. If we come to a place with good toilets, you're close to the town centre so you can get to the bank if you have to without going too far, and have a shaded lawn area, we're happy."

Mr Wettenhall said he believed Hamilton should install at least two new dump sites on major entry/exit roads and this could be supported by grants from the CMCA and from government sources.

He favours a sign-posted stop-over point adjacent to the Uniting Church in Lonsdale St.

Max Keen is another long-term Hamilton resident who has gone public in the past over the issue of an RV stop-over point.

In a letter to the editor in May, Mr Keen said Grey Nomads should be encouraged into the town for the economic benefit they would bring.

"With the (lack of) development going on in town at the moment, what about we support the prospective tenants and look outside the box and try and get this place moving," he said.

Continued: PAGE 3

RV dollars go begging

From : PAGE 1

He suggested a different site, an area known as Victoria Park, at the Grange Burn End of Kennedy St.

"What about Victoria Park? Develop the flat area at the bottom, supply minimal facilities (toilets only). There is plenty of room. What a relaxing way to spend a day or two.

"Use volunteer groups to plant the hill out with native plants, maybe make it dual purpose and have a large free run area for dogs fenced in ... on the hill (for) locals and travellers to use."

Retired businessman and Grey Nomad, Earl Membrey said RV travellers were avoiding Hamilton.

"They spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on these things and if there's no facilities for them in town they'll just move off to another free camp or something that's a bit more conducive to them staying around," he said.

He likes a location on the north side of the Portland Rd bridge for a stop-over point and dump point

"That would be a magnificent free camp area with a time restriction on it so you don't get the idiots going in there camping too long. The sewerage lines run all through there," he said.

"Also, if and when that new service station starts up there, they'll be able to use facilities at that too.



"They are certainly missing out on trade.
"A lot of people don't like cooking in their vans and they'd much rather go to a pub for a meal, and have a few drinks and maybe even play the pokies.
"The whole town's missing out because of it."
Cr Dark said the issue had been brought before council in the past and he was aware that former mayor Cr Albert Calvano was a keen proponent.
"It's not so much the RV stop, it's the dump point," Cr Dark said.
"But we already have dump points. Even though they are in the caravan park, they are free dump points.
"People might not be happy about going into a caravan park but it is a free dump point.
"The other thing is that RV stopovers can be designated. But I understand that they stop at the lake now, and they are self-contained, aren't they.
"But yes we could look into that further."
Cr Dark said installation of a new dump site would cost "a substantial amount of money".
Mr Membrey said the existing dump site inside a caravan park and behind locked gates was impractical.
"No decent person would like troubling a caravan park owner to use their dump point," he said.



A million reasons to be happy

Fifteen nature-based campgrounds from Parry Beach in Denmark to Alexander Bay near Esperance have received a million-dollar funding boost for infrastructure upgrades. City of Albany reserves staff Kynan McAllister, Alex Tucker and Jarrad Minter celebrate at Torbay Inlet near Albany.

REPORT PAGE 4

Picture: Malcolm Heberle



Campgrounds' upgrades get funding

Shannon Hampton

There won't be many unhappy campers on the south coast in the near future after the region's nature-based campgrounds received \$1 million in Royalties for Regions funding for improvements.

Awarded as part of the State Government's WA Caravan and Camping Action Plan initiative, the funding will go towards upgrading campground amenities at 15 sites in the shires of Denmark, Jerramungup, Plantagenet, Ravensthorpe and Esperance and the City of Albany.

City of Albany chief executive Andrew Sharpe said the City had been a key driver behind securing the funding, working proactively with various shires and Tourism

WA to identify priority campgrounds.

Projects earmarked in the City include the creation of a new overnight RV stop in Wellstead and upgrades to Cosy Corner East, Cape Riche, Torbay Inlet, East Bay, Betty's Beach and Norman's Beach.

Parry Beach in the Shire of Denmark, Millers Point and House Beach in the Shire of Jerramungup and the Kendenup Agricultural Grounds in the Shire of Plantagenet will also be upgraded.

"We are very pleased to have been able to secure such a great outcome for tourism on the south coast," Mr Sharpe said.

He thanked the State Government for its support and praised

its local government partners

for their strong collaboration. Shire of Denmark community and regulatory services executive director Gregg Harwood welcomed the funding and thanked the City.

"They've used the strength of their resources and ability to strategically plan for their own benefit and for the region's as well," he said.

Tourism Minister Kim Hames said 1.27 million caravan and camping visitors spent \$860 million in the State last year, mostly in the regions.

Work at the sites is expected to be complete by the end of this financial year.



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Gregg Harwood



City of Albany reserves staff Kynan McAllister, Alex Tucker and Jarrad Minitier at a campsite in Torbay.

Picture: Malcolm Heberle



Gold Coast misses out on lucrative RV market

ROLLING BY

THERE'S a growing tourism market driving by the Gold Coast and Murwillumbah is cashing in on it – the mobile home and recreational vehicle sector. With 66,000 members across Australia, the Coast is being called on to follow the Tweed lead ahead of the Commonwealth Games.

ROBYN WUTH reports, page 3

RV market bypasses Gold Coast

ROBYN WUTH

ROBYN.WUTH@NEWS.COM.AU

THE Gold Coast's loss is Murwillumbah's gain with the town opening up its showgrounds to snare the lucrative recreational vehicle market expected to inject tens of thousands of dollars into the Tweed economy.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia, which is the largest club in the Southern Hemisphere with more than 66,000 members, has welcomed the northern NSW move and called on the Gold Coast to follow suit in time for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

CMCA chief executive officer Richard Barwick predicted Murwillumbah and the surrounding area would reap a massive financial reward which will cost the community next to nothing.

"This is a fantastic news as far as our members are concerned," Mr Barwick said. "Recreational vehicles are completely self contained, all we need is somewhere to park."

RV owners also need a "dump site" to safely dispose of black water and access to potable water. "We generate

our own power through solar. We pride ourselves on being an environmentally friendly group," he said.

"We dispose of our own rubbish and our own waste. The only thing we leave behind is tyre tracks."

Mr Barwick said the group had been negotiating with the Gold Coast to open up more sites to the RV users, with little success. "It would be a boost for the Gold Coast not only financially, but we are a travelling

army of volunteers. The Gold Coast has 52 major events every year and with Commonwealth Games coming up, well we are a powerful group of people who have time on our hands and are willing to help."

CMCA research shows most of their members are grey nomads who on average spend \$700 a week in the communities they visit.

"The potential for Murwillumbah is enormous. It is an ideal destination just off the Pacific Highway and they are trying to capture the market that

drives past their door. It's a really smart move."

After a determined 2½-year campaign from Murwillumbah and District Chamber of Commerce,

Tweed Shire Council approved a development application for RV-friendly campsites at the showground.

COC president Toni Zuschke was "thrilled" by the move.

"It is going to be sensational for the region and will be a boost for the local economy," Ms Zuschke said.



City calls for camper van courtesy

ALBANY drivers are being asked to show some patience as caravans and camper vans start to appear on roads and streets.

Mayor Dennis Wellington is encouraging the community to warmly welcome members of the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia as they celebrate their 30th National Rally in Albany next month.

The CMCA is the largest RV (recreational vehicle) club in the southern hemisphere with more than 65,000 members.

Between October 25 and November 1, Albany's Centennial Park will be home to more than 800 RVs from across the country.

"This is a fantastic event and a great opportunity for Albany to showcase our wonderful region to people from all over Australia," Mr Wellington said.

"The City of Albany is encouraging the community to give the CMCA visitors a friendly reception and exercise patience as the RVs arrive in Albany.

"We are also encouraging businesses to consider making preparations for the extra visitors."

He said in the weeks leading up to the rally residents may notice an increase in the number of RVs in the region, which may result in traffic disruption and delays.

"Please be patient and understanding during this time," he said.

Between Friday October 23 and Sunday, October 25, the 800 RVs will begin parking at eastern precinct of Centennial Park.

Please expect long queues of RVs along North Road and parts of Lockyer Avenue on these dates, and again when the RVs begin to leave after 1 November.

The City of Albany will implement traffic management to ease congestion, however drivers might consider avoiding the area.

Once the RVs are stationed at Centennial Park they will not move during the eight-day rally period.



Region revs up its recreational cred

ROBYN WUTH

ROBYN.WUTH@NEWS.COM.AU

MURWILLUMBAH has again got the jump on the Gold Coast, opening up its showgrounds to snare the lucrative recreational vehicle market expected to inject tens of thousands of dollars into the Tweed economy.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia, which is the largest club in the Southern Hemisphere with more than 66,000 members, has welcomed the northern NSW move and called on the Gold Coast region to follow suit in time for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

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RV owners also need a "dump site" to safely dispose of black water and access to potable water.

"We generate our own power through solar. We pride ourselves on being an environmentally friendly group," he said.

"We dispose of our own rubbish and our own waste. The only thing we leave behind is tyre tracks."

After a determined two and a half year campaign from the Murwillumbah District Chamber of Commerce, Tweed Shire Council approved a development application for RV-friendly campsites at the showground, which could accommodate approximately 26 RVs.

Chamber president Toni Zuschke was "thrilled" by the move.

"It is going to be sensational for the region and will be a boost for the local economy," Ms Zuschke said.

Mr Barwick said the group had been negotiating with the Gold Coast to open up more sites to the RV users, with little success.

"It would be a boost for the Gold Coast not only financially, but we are a travelling army of

volunteers. The Gold Coast has 52 major events every year and with Commonwealth Games coming up, well we are a powerful group of people who have time on our hands and are willing to help."

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The move makes Murwillumbah the second Northern Rivers site to welcome RVs after Kyogle.