

## NSW Caravan Parks & Camping Grounds review – Comments by a Caravan Owner

*My comments are broad based and follow many years of travelling and staying as a tourist within NSW. They are more Standards based but I believe relevant to the current review.*

As an engaged participant/observer of the Caravan & Camping lifestyle it seems that the Industry facilitating fellow travellers is at some sort of a crossroad – between **Conundrum** and or **Opportunity**.

- Australian Caravan production growing at 10%+ YTD, European Imports growing, 600,000+ caravans and RV vehicles registered and Australian residents passionately seeking lifestyle relief by getting away into our wonderful country, with more & more taking this choice rather than overseas travel.
- With this heavy momentum of demand, we see reductions in overall Caravan park count. This is driven by some rationalisation and commercial failures. Less choice for the consumer, also complicated by the diversity in standards and quality of the Parks or grounds.
- Part of the paradigm is the shift in end users now being dramatically weighted (over 50%) being young families, all demanding a more refined and broader offer at the parks to support their children's enjoyment. The days of the Caravan Industry being a world of 'Grey Nomads' is over, yet many still believe in it... it is now a myth proven by facts. We see and hear tension within the older caravanners, 'parks are too expensive now as we don't need jumping pillows, playgrounds and more, what is wrong with CP owners, we wont stay in that town anymore'... yet all the CP owner is doing is changing his business model to suit the clear majority and to try & make a profitable living.
- How has such a diversity in standards of caravan Parks occurred? Why do some parks have sites so close together that you can't even open out your awning? Surely that is a fire risk... Who sets a minimum site size, State or Council... it seems State or even

Federal is the only answer. I can recall sites at a Moree Park being just scarily tight & dangerous.

- Within the standards why are so many parks, be that Caravan or Camping, allowing or placing rental sights directly under trees, namely gum trees. So many deaths or injuries every year from falling tree limbs. This needs to be part of a standards review. Surely there is an inherent liability issue here on the Park owner or Council who have freely and willingly allowed you to camp or stay within this high risk area.
- As part of the minimum standards required for Caravan Parks a Dump Site should be mandatory, as 75% of vans now have full ensuites, and towns offering camping grounds should have dump sites available in the town area at least, arresting dumping within the camping ground (dumped waste now is prevalent in these camping grounds).
- I take note that in Caravan Parks that one of the conglomerates, 'Top Tourist' are now segmenting their offer to be 3 tiered; from a more basic park, through to resort park. This is a step in the right direction, clearly offering a lower priced less featured park for the budget conscious through to full featured resort.
- Camping or 'Freedom Camping for caravanners'. What a hot subject this is. With so many of the more mature caravanners seeking low/no cost holidaying these camping locations are highly sought after, with news and comment spread feverishly on social media. The issue that arises is the diversity in approaches by local councils: do we manage & have a nominal charge for doing such in our community or do we let them go wild and pay the consequence in environmental damage, a cost to our ratepayers for cleaning and restoration. It seems to be getting worse, with truck parking bays now being used by caravans as an overnight sight, some for days, all trying to evade costs. My thoughts here are strong, why should any ratepayer in any council have to financially support a passer-by. These fee dodgers claim they pay by supporting local shops with their purchases but the cost of damage to the camping areas is not included in these shops cost of goods/cost of doing business. It should be the same as any

caravan park, 'User Pays'. A rational fee in clearly defined areas by council, any camping outside of these areas is a heavy fine. It ends all the debate, it is self funding (fees pay for council maintenance), it frees truck bays for truck drivers, it preserves our environment which is critical and our country stays pristine. The abuse to our camping or presumably crown land is becoming rampant and needs attention.

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