

South Gippsland Recreational Vehicle (RV) and Camping Position Paper (Draft)



South Gippsland
Shire Council



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Introduction

The South Gippsland Recreational Vehicle (RV) and Camping Position Paper provides ways for Council to support and enable the local recreational vehicle (RV) and camping industry in South Gippsland. Since the adoption of the 2014 Recreational Vehicle (RV) Strategy, South Gippsland has seen market growth and the RV and camping industry continues to evolve.

Many visitors still seek traditional caravan parks and camping grounds with facilities, however, there is an increase of independent and self-sufficient freedom campers who seek free/low cost sites with limited facilities.

All six Gippsland Councils support their local RV and camping industry, either through a formalised strategy, plan or position. Many priorities include the development of infrastructure to support overnight stays, designated long vehicle parking, and dump point sites. Some of these sites and facilities are supported by Council and operated by a Committee of Management.

South Gippsland Shire Council continues to take a strategic approach to support the industry which includes tourism operators and RV users. This position paper provides strategic direction to guide planning and grow the RV and camping industry in the Shire.

The following areas form the key focus of Council's position and directly impact the RV and camping industry:

1. Recreational Vehicle (RV) Schemes
2. Commercial RV and camping industry
3. Free/low cost RV and camping sites
4. Long Vehicle Parking
5. Dump Points
6. Signage

The South Gippsland RV and Camping Position Paper outlines Council's position for the development and growth of key tourism sites and infrastructure directly related to the recreational vehicle (RV) and camping industry in South Gippsland. Council's position will ensure a strategic approach to current and future development of the RV and camping industry in South Gippsland.

Tourism in South Gippsland

Tourism is an important contributor to the South Gippsland economy. Visitors to the region enjoy the abundance of natural attractions, the increasing number of boutique food and beverage experiences, a vibrant arts community and unique towns and villages scattered throughout the region.

Recreational Vehicle and Camping is a popular activity for visitors to South Gippsland. The 2013 Prom Country Economic Impact and Visitor Profile outlines '44% of summer and 23% of autumn visitors' to South Gippsland choose to stay in camping and caravan accommodation. With a strategic approach and increased infrastructure to support the industry, there is an opportunity to grow this market in winter during the traditionally quiet months.

South Gippsland Tourism Industry Facts:

- Approximately 1 million visitors annually to South Gippsland
- Tourism contributes over 100 million to the South Gippsland economy annually
- Average visitors spend in the region:
 - Day visitor = \$56
 - Domestic overnight = \$100
 - International overnight = \$112
- Visitors spend an average of 3.3 nights in South Gippsland
- Tourism supplies approximately 1000 jobs, with approximately 650 of these direct tourism related jobs.



Industry Overview

Recreational Vehicle (RV) and camping continues to be a popular activity for Australians and international visitors. Tourism Research Australia states that the caravan and camping industry is growing in Australia. The 30 to 54 market and the 55+ market are the most popular age groups to enjoy RV and camping experiences within Australia.

The RV and camping market has evolved considerably over recent years and the availability of new self-contained RVs and the increased domestic travel of 'grey nomads' has led to the development of free/low cost sites throughout Australia. Free/low cost sites generally provide basic and limited facilities when compared with commercial caravan parks and camping grounds. Commercial parks generally feature a range of facilities which cater for the traditional market who still seek this form of accommodation and facilities.

RVs can be identified as caravans, camper trailers, campervans and motorhomes. There are many variations including self-contained vehicles with cooking and amenities, and non-self-contained vehicles.

Due to the increased use of free/low cost sites, Council introduced a site specific survey to understand consumer needs. This ongoing targeted RV consumer survey is available to users of Council's managed free/low cost sites, Franklin River Reserve and Bass Valley Camping Ground.

Feedback from 421 surveys submitted over the three year period (2015–2017) has provided a snapshot of visitors to the region.

- 51% were first time visitors to the region
- Most visitors travelled through the Shire from November to April and visitation was highest during January and February
- Top three vehicles used were caravan, motorhome and van conversion
- 64% of respondents were retired
- 76% of respondents were aged 55+
- 88% of visitors were Australian, of which 56% were from Victoria
- Germans (31%) and French (19%) were the top two international visitors
- 75% of respondents were travelling as a couple
- Respondents also stayed in commercial caravan parks, Wilsons Promontory National Park and other low cost sites within the region



Recreational Vehicle (RV) Schemes

RV Schemes are the initiative of industry bodies such as the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia Limited (CMCA) and the Caravan Industry Association of Australia. They encourage short stays by identifying common criteria which appeal to the RV market.

CMCA

The CMCA program involves the RV Friendly Town (RVFT) and the RV Friendly Destination (RVFD) initiatives.

RV Friendly Town (RVFT)

An RVFT is one that has met a set of guidelines to ensure they provide a certain amount of amenities and services for RV travellers.

Essential criteria of an RVFT include:

- Provision of appropriate parking within the town centre including access to a general shopping area with groceries and fresh produce
- Provision of appropriate short term low cost parking (24/48 hour) for self-contained vehicles within the town precinct
- Access to potable water
- Access to a free dump point within the town precinct

There are various RVFT throughout Gippsland, however Korumburra is currently the only officially recognised RVFT in South Gippsland. Located at the Korumburra Showgrounds, it was supported by the Korumburra Business Association (KBA), the Korumburra Agriculture & Pastoral Society (A&P Society), and the Korumburra Tourist Park.





Recreational Vehicle (RV) Schemes

RV Friendly Destination (RVFD)

The RV Friendly Destination (RVFD) program is a CMCA initiative aimed at assisting towns and communities that are not able to meet the criteria of the CMCA RV Friendly Town (RVFT) program.

All RVFD are assessed on an individual basis and the decision is made by the CMCA.

Essential criteria of an RVFD include:

- Provision of short term, low cost overnight parking (24/48 hours) for self-contained RVs in a safe location
- The nominated parking area needs to be on a solid level surface with enough room for large vehicles to manoeuvre safely
- If the nominated site is a campground, it needs to be well-maintained and offer facilities such as BBQ areas, toilets, power, covered seating and refuse bins

Caravan Industry Association of Australia

The Caravan Industry Association of Australia 'Community Welcomes Recreation Vehicles' program is supported nationally by the caravan and camping industry as a program promoting towns, destinations and regions as being places that actively encourage recreational vehicle travellers to visit them.

Council Position

Council will continue to support towns:

- That meet the Recreational Vehicle (RV) Schemes essential criteria and who are supported by the community and/or business association.
- That are self-sustaining and not reliant upon ongoing financial support from Council.

Commercial RV and Camping Industry in South Gippsland

RV and camping continues to be a popular activity for visitors to South Gippsland. Visitors stay in caravan parks and camping grounds located throughout the region. During peak season the coastal parks and camping grounds are heavily booked, especially through the summer school holidays and on weekends, in particular long weekends.

South Gippsland has 12 commercial caravan parks, including Wilsons Promontory National Park, which is operated by Parks Victoria. Council is the appointed Committee of Management for the Crown of four caravan parks: Yanakie, Long Jetty, Korumburra and Waratah Bay. Of these, two are leased and two are managed by Council. The remaining seven are privately operated.

South Gippsland caravan parks cater for visitors with tents, self-contained and non-self-contained vehicles.

Facilities include:

- Cabins
- Powered/Unpowered sites
- Amenities block
- Barbeque facilities
- Camp kitchen
- Recreation facilities
- Dump point

Council Position

Council will continue to support the Shire's commercial RV and camping parks through:

- Business development and assistance programs.
- Participation in local and regional RV and camping industry marketing initiatives.
- Support the future development of commercial RV and camping parks that comply with the South Gippsland Planning Scheme.
- Considered strategic planning, and policy advocacy and development to support the Shire's commercial caravan parks.



Caravan Parks in South Gippsland



1 Korumburra Tourist Park

2 Leongatha Caravan Park

3 Prom Central Caravan Park

4 Toora Tourist Park

5 Long Jetty Caravan Park

6 Yanakie Caravan Park

7 Shallow Inlet Caravan Park

8 Sandy Point Holiday Park

9 Waratah Bay Caravan Park

10 Walkerville Foreshore Reserve

11 Venus Bay Caravan Park

National Park Camping

12 Wilsons Promontory National Park

Free/Low cost RV and Camping Sites in South Gippsland

South Gippsland free/low cost sites are increasingly popular during the holiday and peak seasons. Recent data reveals that Australian's and international travellers visiting South Gippsland enjoy the regions free/low cost sites.

There are currently seven free/low cost sites in South Gippsland and Council manages two of these sites; Franklin River Reserve and Bass Valley Camping Ground. The remaining sites are operated by either a Committee of Management, Parks Victoria or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Franklin River Reserve is a popular site located close to the township of Toora. In 1988, the Shire of South Gippsland was appointed Committee of Management and the area was reserved for "Public, Camping and Water".

In recent years a number of actions have been taken to reduce the impacts on the site including:

- Installation of bollards, fences and gates (encouraging designated areas for day use)
- Banning open fires and solid fuel barbecues
- Removal of rubbish bins (visitors are required to take all rubbish with them)
- Signage stating maximum 48 hour stay and the Reserve rules

Bass Valley Camping Ground is a small camping ground located on Bass Valley Road near the Bass River, has been managed by Council since the 1950s. Council has to ensure close management of the site due to its bush setting.

Management of Franklin River Reserve and Bass Valley Camping Ground includes:

- Toilet maintenance and cleaning
- Grass mowing of the site
- Tree maintenance
- Garden maintenance



Council Position

Council will continue to:

- Manage Franklin River Reserve and Bass Valley Camping Ground.
- Provide resources to each site to ensure public safety.
- Support community groups that seek to develop and manage additional free/low cost sites that comply with Council's guidelines and criteria.

Free/Low cost RV Sites in South Gippsland

Authorised Free/Low Cost Sites

- 1 Bass Valley Camping Ground—Managed by South Gippsland Shire Council
- 2 Bear Gully Camping Reserve—Managed by Parks Victoria
- 3 Franklin River Reserve—Managed by South Gippsland Shire Council
- 4 Loch Memorial Reserve—Managed by Committee of Management
- 5 Shallow Inlet Camping Reserve— Managed by Parks Victoria
- 6 Turtons Creek Camping area within Turtons Creek Scenic Reserve - Managed by DELWP
- 7 Korumburra Showgrounds - Managed by Korumburra A & P Society.
- 8 Mirboo North Golf Club - The golf club applied for a permit in 2016 to utilise a section of their car park for RV and caravan parking. This site is yet to be activated.



Free/Low Cost Site Guidelines and Criteria

The following guidelines and criteria will assist community groups to develop a free/low cost site.

- Investigate if a planning permit is required
- Obtain written approval from the land manager
- Demonstrated community consultation
- Determine whether the proposed RV and camping site will not impact on the current site activity eg. annual events or local sporting activities
- Ensure that RV and camping activity will not impact on the environment of the proposed site
- Determine whether the proposed site will not impact on existing businesses
- Provide appropriate resources to manage the site
- Ensure sufficient parking and safe access for vehicles
- Ensure the proposed site is accessible and in close proximity to support local businesses
- Complete a risk assessment to ensure appropriate site safety and compliance

Minimum site requirements:

- Parking for vehicles
- Maximum 48 hour stay

Desirable site requirements:

- Public toilets
- Rubbish bins
- Dump Point
- Potable Water



Long Vehicle Parking

Currently eight towns in South Gippsland have designated car parks and areas available for long vehicle parking to cater for RVs, boats and trailers.

Long vehicle car parks are significantly longer than a regular vehicle parking bay. These car parks accommodate recreational vehicles, boats, trailers and longer vehicles that can be difficult to park.

It is economically beneficial to a town and region if long vehicle parking bays are located in, or close to, retail precincts.

Council Position

Council will continue to:

- In consultation with community and business networks and relevant internal Council departments, support the development of additional Long Vehicle Parking near town precincts.
- Install directional signage that meets Council and VicRoads signage guidelines.



Long Vehicle Parking South Gippsland



- 1** Poowong - The extensive number of parking located in the median strip for cars, allows opportunities for long vehicles to park along Nyora Rd.
- 2** Korumburra - Located in Little Commercial St.
- 3** Leongatha - Parking located along the western side of Anderson St from Alison St to Smith St. Parking also located at the wayside stop, opposite Leongatha Police Station.
- 4** Meeniyan - The recent upgrade along Thompkins Rd includes designated long vehicle parking. A path connects the car park to the main street.
- 5** Fish Creek - Located beside the Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT), in the vicinity of the BP service station, provides a central access point to town amenities and retail precinct.
- 6** Foster - Located in McDonald St, opposite Stockyard Gallery complex.
- 7** Toora - Toora Jetty Rd adjacent to the Great Southern Rail Trail (GRST). There is a pathway that leads into the retail precinct of Toora.
- 8** Mirboo North - Located on the corner of Baths Road and Ridgway, in the Baromi Park carpark opposite the former Shire hall.



Dump Points

A dump point is specifically designed to receive contents from the holding tank in an RV. The dump point is installed as low to the ground as possible and allows access to large vehicles up to 20 metres in length.

They are an essential aspect of the RV market allowing visitors to discharge wastewater in an acceptable manner to an approved disposal system.

Dump points are strategically located throughout South Gippsland within recreation reserves, caravan parks and service stations.

Applications by community groups can be considered through Council's Community Grants process. South Gippsland Water, the land owner and relevant authorities, must also be consulted with prior to and during the application process.

Council Position

Interested community groups will be encouraged to:

- Contact CMCA to obtain relevant information about the CMCA dump point scheme and the installation of dump points.
- Apply for funding through Council's Community Grants program to contribute to the cost of the dump point.
- Council will not support the installation of dump points on Council owned or managed land.

Dump Points in South Gippsland



- 1 Korumburra Showgrounds—Free. Refundable key deposit.
- 2 Leongatha Caravan Park—Free for guests. Fees apply to the public.
- 3 BP service station Mirboo North—Free
- 4 Meeniyan Recreation Reserve—Free
- 5 BP service station Foster—Free
- 6 Prom Central Caravan Park—Free for guests. Fees apply to the public.
- 7 Toora Tourist Park—Free for guests. Fees apply to the public.
- 8 Long Jetty Caravan Park, Port Welshpool—Free for guests. Fees apply to the public.
- 9 Tidal River—Free
- 10 Venus Bay Caravan Park - Free

Signage

Informative and interpretative tourism signage provides an accurate account of the region's attractions and activities. It can also inform visitors about local emergency management information and contact details during high risk seasons.

It is important that tourism signage is consistent throughout the region. If it is effective and strategically located in key RV and camping locations, it can encourage longer visitation and greater visitor spend.

Council Position

Council will:

- Ensure that appropriate interpretative and site regulation signage is installed at Council managed free/low cost sites.
- Provide strategically placed signs in RV relevant locations.





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