

# Welcome



**Eleanor Scully, Richard Mainey, Garry Lee, Gary Rebgetz, Lorraine Smith and Richard Barwick**

I recently read a comment, made by a member, claiming that 'we are not an RV club'. I am very grateful that Life Member, Don Eldred and the then Chairman Gary Rebgetz of the 2006 Board of Directors thought otherwise and established the RV Friendly Program. The success of this program has been outstanding, with more and more councils identifying the benefit of road tourism, which is growing rapidly Australia wide.

With his huge contribution to the project, I saw great benefit in approaching Don to find out more about its origin. Don said, "The trigger for this program was that in 2000, the then Rest Area and Environmental Committee was listing areas – both unofficial areas and formally Council approved ones. This gave rise to a very changeable situation with additions and withdrawals occurring without warning. It became obvious that a more formal, secure system was needed.

"During a visit to a local town, a meeting was arranged between the mayor and CEO, to further the mutual interests in this town. After that meeting, the mayor requested they put up the CMCA banner at the end of each town. This required Board approval, so after much discussion, a protocol under the name of 'RV Friendly Town' was agreed. This meant that all future arrangements and agreements were by a contract and binding on both parties."

An RV Friendly Town (RVFT) or Destination (RVFD) is one that has met a set of criteria to ensure they provide a certain number of facilities and a certain level of services for RV travellers. When RV tourists enter these locations, they know they will be welcomed and have access to certain facilities and services, as well as a safe place to stay.

Generally, an RVFT will provide

appropriate parking within the town centre (providing access to general shopping areas), provision of short term, low cost parking (usually from 24 to 48 hours) for self-contained vehicles, access to potable water and access to a free dump point.

An RVFD is usually a tourist site, hotel or club, a winery or simply a well-appointed campground. These sites do not meet the criteria of an RVFT, but have the provision of short term, low cost parking (usually from 24 to 48 hours) for self-contained vehicles, a parking area that has a solid, level surface and enough room for vehicles to manoeuvre. Once an application has been made and approved, RV Friendly signs can be resurrected at the town or destination.

I think we all appreciate that the RV Friendly program is well utilised by all RV travellers and is not limited to CMCA members. This can cause rigorous discussion at times, but it is important to remember that our Club has been in receipt of substantial state government funding over the years for dump point installation, which tends to be the focus of the town becoming RV Friendly.

CMCA has also had much appreciated, ongoing support from Tourism Holdings Australia (KEA, Maui, Britz, Mighway and RV Sales Centre) towards the dump point subsidy program and the Board has recently signed off on a new four-year contract with this long term CMCA supporter.

In July 2014, CMCA celebrated our 200th RVFT. At this time, we had approximately 68 RVFDs. In December 2016, just two-and-a-half years later, we celebrated our 300th RVFT and had 143 RVFDs. This is equivalent to a 20 per cent growth in RVFTs per annum and a huge 40 per cent growth per annum for RVFDs. This illustrates the huge success

of our RV Friendly program.

The program has been so successful that similar programs have been introduced. The Caravan Industry Association (CIA), representing tourism industry suppliers such as RV manufacturers and caravan parks, have introduced their own version of the RV Friendly program, called Community Welcomes Recreational Vehicles. As the saying goes, 'imitation is the sincerest form of flattery'. However, there is one major difference.

To obtain this classification from the CIA, council must sign a declaration stating that 'if there is a commercial caravan park in the community, the LGA does not provide free overnight parking/camping within the town centre or town boundary'. I think RV travellers will quickly identify the difference between both of these initiatives as CMCA strongly promotes freedom of choice when travelling.

The Board feels as though the Club and our members may not be utilising these towns and destinations as well as we should be. We sign them up and promote their town or destination through our communication platforms; however, that is as far as we go.

Identifying a need to become more involved with these places, we are looking to introduce a 'micro site' as part of our new website developments. This micro site will be dedicated to the RV Friendly program and allow towns and destinations to display more information to our members. This will include history of the town or destination, key tourist sites and attractions nearby and promotion of special events in the area.

You may wonder why we consider this to be such an important facet of the organisation. This is our public face, both for RV travellers and all levels of government. We are aware of new members joining CMCA, as they feel a commitment to join the Club that predominantly provides the facilities and services they use while travelling. This program has had such traction that local councils are now regularly approaching the Club to participate in the program. There is now a very positive feel that road tourism is critically important to these areas.

So, let the juggernaut roll on. As members, we need to continue to support these locations by visiting them and promoting them around the camp fire.

*Travel Safely and*

*Laugh More, Live Longer.*

*Garry Lee A67278, Chairman, on behalf of the CMCA Board of Directors*