GREAT OCEAN ROAD COAST COMMITTEE

CAMPER FORUM REPORT

18 January 2014



Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS/CONCERNS AND RESPONSES	4
ISSUE 1: 30 YEAR VAN POLICY	4
ISSUE 2: PARK COMMUNICATION WITH CAMPERS	12
ISSUE 3: CONSULTATION WITH CAMPERS AND PARK PLANNING (E.G. MASTER PLANNING AND FUTURE PLANS)	13
ISSUE 4: POLICY REGARDING TENTS ON SITES	14
ISSUE 5: GENERAL/OTHER ISSUES	15
PROVIDING GORCC WITH FEEDBACK ON THIS REPORT	18
STAYING INFORMED	18

INTRODUCTION

On the 18th June 2013 the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee held an information session/forum for campers at the Torquay Foreshore Caravan Park in the camp kitchen.

This report details the concerns and questions raised at the event, and outlines GORCC's responses to them.

Around 300 - 400 campers attended the session, which was held by GORCC in response to concerns voiced by a number of campers, particularly in relation to a park rule regarding 30 year old plus vans.

While this rule was the main focus of the meeting, other areas of concern raised during the meeting included:

- General communication with campers
- Consultation with campers and park planning (e.g. master plan and future plans)
- The policy regarding tents on sites.
- Investment into the park
- General maintenance issues
- Other

GORCC acknowledges that many campers are very concerned and upset in relation to a range of issues and is looking to work with campers both directly and through the Torquay Concerned Campers Committee to improve park operations and processes.

The questions and concerns raised and GORCC's responses to them have been recorded and summarised below. For some issues, questions and concerns, there is an immediate solution and a commitment from GORCC. Where GORCC is still working on finding a solution or investigating an issue, this has also been outlined and explained below.

GORCC thanks all campers for coming to the session and for giving us valuable feedback. We value your time and your input.

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS/CONCERNS AND RESPONSES

ISSUE 1: 30 YEAR VAN POLICY

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
How does this 30 year rule get removed?	We have heard campers concerns regarding this rule and understand that they want to see it amended or removed. We have committed to amending this rule for seasonal campers. a) Seasonal Permit Holders In response we are currently working to develop criteria for the assessment of seasonal vans so that campers can produce evidence that will allow their 30year+ van to remain in the park. GORCC will be working on these criteria with the input of the Torquay Concerned Campers Committee and the changes will then be communicated to all campers. GORCC will put together a set of criteria and will make these criteria publicly available and consistent for all seasonals. These criteria will ask that seasonals have a van that is safe, towable and of good quality and appearance. These criteria will be worked on in consultation with the TCCC and communicated to all of you. Evidence will be required from seasonals to meet the criteria. We will then look to review the vans every 5 years to save campers from having to give us evidence every year. b) Annual/TMP Permit Holders At a minimum, GORCC CEO Richard Davies has committed to annuals that they will be given more time to replace their vans. Annuals will be given at least 18months to replace their vans (in which case they would need to be replaced by November 2015). The subcommittee will also discuss the issue further to see if any other amendments can be made. It should be noted that state policy differentiates annuals/TMPs from seasonals as TMP vans are more permanent - they remain in the park for many years exposed to a corrosive seaside environment. Many are also un-towable. This will all be taken into consideration by the sub-committee.

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Where does this 30 year rule come from? Who is driving it? Is it happening everywhere?	The 30 year rule is based on the industry standard (same as in other Crown land caravan parks) and on State Government best practice guidelines. They are also in place due to Committee concerns for safety and quality standards. The main purpose of the rule is risk management, particularly in the case of a fire. Vans must be towable in the case of fire, as they may need to be removed to ensure CFA access and to reduce the spread of fire. Importantly, they are also in place to meet CFA requirements/guidelines. GORCC is going to review the regulations further to answer this question in more detail. We are arranging a meeting with CFA representatives in order to get further direction on their requirements and the reasoning behind their requirements.
The inspection process needs to be cleared up/clarified.	GORCC agrees that these criteria need to be clearer. We have heard campers concerns regarding this rule and understand that they want to see it amended or removed. We have committed to amending this rule for seasonal campers. a) Seasonal Permit Holders In response we are currently working to develop criteria for the assessment of seasonal vans so that campers can produce evidence that will allow their 30year+ van to remain in the park. GORCC will be working on these criteria with the input of the Torquay Concerned Campers Committee and the changes will then be communicated to all campers. GORCC will put together a set of criteria and will make these criteria publicly available and consistent for all seasonals. These criteria will ask that seasonals have a van that is safe, towable and of good quality and appearance. These criteria will be worked on in consultation with the TCCC and communicated to all of you. Evidence will be required from seasonals to meet the criteria. We will then look to review the vans every 5 years to save campers from having to give us evidence every year. b) Annual/TMP Permit Holders At a minimum, GORCC CEO Richard Davies has committed to annuals that they will be given more time to replace their vans. Annuals will be given at least 18months to replace their vans (in which case they would need to be replaced by November 2015). The subcommittee will also discuss the issue further to see if any other amendments can be made. It should be noted that state policy differentiates annuals/TMPs from seasonals as TMP vans are more permanent - they remain in the park for many years exposed to a corrosive seaside environment. Many are also un-towable. This will all be taken into consideration

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
	by the sub-committee.
Quality v. Ageits quality and safety that is important.	See above
Can renovated, updated vans be acceptable? Why is 30 years the only factor?	See above
We need more time! It's a lot of money - we need 5 years.	See above
WE have already spent a lot of money - why should we spend more?	See above
	We have heard campers concerns regarding this rule and understand that they want to see it amended or removed. We have committed to amending this rule for seasonal campers. a) Seasonal Permit Holders
I'm a seasonal. Why are there different rules for the roads and GORCC? My van is allowed on the road it should be allowed in the	In response we are currently working to develop criteria for the assessment of seasonal vans so that campers can produce evidence that will allow their 30year+ van to remain in the park. GORCC will be working on these criteria with the input of the Torquay Concerned Campers Committee and the changes will then be communicated to all campers.
park.	GORCC will put together a set of criteria and will make these criteria publicly available and consistent for all seasonals. These criteria will ask that seasonals have a van that is safe, towable and of good quality and appearance. These criteria will be worked on in consultation with the TCCC and communicated to all of you. Evidence will be required from seasonals to meet the criteria.
	We will then look to review the vans every 5 years to save campers from having to give us evidence every year.

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For those who invest money into upgrading our vans, what it the guarantee for how long we can have our sites?	The state government policy that was introduced in 2009 was overturned. Since this time there has been no indication from State Government that it will be brought back in or that GORCC will have to implement it. GORCC can't guarantee that the State Government will never consider bringing in a similar policy again. However, we have had no indication that this will occur. We can confirm that the Committee is not planning on implementing a ballot process outside of State Government Policy direction.
Is this 30 year rule about turnover?	No, while we acknowledge that campers are concerned about turnover policies due to past State Government policy that required a ballot system, this policy is not related to turnover. The Committee believes that healthy, sufficient natural turnover is already occurring in the park, and the State Government has not indicated that any turnover or ballot policy is to be re-introduced.
Have the vans be assessed and who by?	Vans were assessed by Park Management from the outside and assessment was based on appearance/obvious signs of wear and tear. We agree that this process needs to be clearer, as does the inspection criteria. In response to feedback received we will be developing an independent inspection process and will communicate this back to campers.
How many sites will turn over due to this policy?	GORCC does not know the answer to this until all vans have been assessed and given that the rules are being amended, this number is expected to be greatly reduced and may not even affect anyone.
How have the vans been assessed? We need clear criteria?	GORCC agrees that these criteria need to be clearer. We have heard campers concerns regarding this rule and understand that they want to see it amended or removed. We have committed to amending this rule for seasonal campers. a) Seasonal Permit Holders In response we are currently working to develop criteria for the assessment of seasonal vans so that campers can produce evidence that will allow their 30year+ van to remain in the park. GORCC will be working on these criteria with the input of the Torquay Concerned Campers Committee and the changes will then be communicated to all campers.

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	GORCC will put together a set of criteria and will make these criteria publicly available and consistent for all seasonals. These criteria will ask that seasonals have a van that is safe, towable and of good quality and appearance. These criteria will be worked on in consultation with the TCCC and communicated to all of you. Evidence will be required from seasonals to meet the criteria. We will then look to review the vans every 5 years to save campers from having to give us evidence every year.
	b) Annual/TMP Permit Holders At a minimum, GORCC CEO Richard Davies has committed to annuals that they will be given more time to replace their vans. Annuals will be given at least 18months to replace their vans (in which case they would need to be replaced by November 2015).
	The subcommittee will also discuss the issue further to see if any other amendments can be made.
	It should be noted that state policy differentiates annuals/TMPs from seasonals as TMP vans are more permanent - they remain in the park for many years exposed to a corrosive seaside environment. Many are also un-towable. This will all be taken into consideration by the sub-committee.
How many people will this policy affect?	GORCC does not know the answer to this until all vans have been assessed and given that the rules are being amended, this number is expected to be greatly reduced and may not even affect anyone.
Are people on the waiting list aware that they can't bring in vans over 15 years should they be offered a site?	GORCC believes that this rule has been clearly communicated to those on the waiting list, however to be certain that this is the case, we will get in touch with all those on the list in order to ensure they are aware of the rule.
Are there enough people on the waiting list to fill sites if campers leave due to this policy?	Even though there are a large number of prospective campers on the waiting list, GORCC is not looking to remove or replace our current, valued campers. We also don't believe that a large number will feel they cannot meet the rules now that they are being amended, nullifying this issue.
Van replacement will decrease your potential patronage - do you have a plan to deal with this?	As above

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
Why do our vans need to be moveable? They don't pose a risk. Therefore should the state of the chasse even be one of the criteria?	The main purpose of the rule is risk management, particularly in the case of a fire. Vans must be towable in the case of fire, as they may need to be removed to ensure CFA access and to reduce the spread of fire. GORCC is looking to meet with CFA representatives to further discuss these guidelines and has been in touch with the CFA.
Will the facilities at the park be able to handle the power needs of all these younger vans? And sullage needs?	Circuit breakers on every site that limits the power each van can use. It would be up to the individual camper to ensure they don't use power beyond that allocated limit.
What has the CFA actually said re: fire safety?	GORCC is going to review the regulations further to answer this question in more detail. We are arranging a meeting with CFA representatives in order to get further direction on their requirements and the reasoning behind their requirements.
How will the elderly or those with little resources replace their vans?	We have heard from many campers that they are concerned about the costs of replacing a van which is one of the factors contributing to our decision to amend the rule as discussed above for seasonals and to look into potential solutions for annuals.
How/why are vans being sold to those on the waiting list if they don't meet the policy? This is illegal	This should not be occurring. If this has occurred it is in error and this requirement will be enforced by management.
Can the TCCC address the committee on this issue?	Yes, the TCCC can make an application to appear before the Committee and this option has been communicated to the group.
How can we even prove that our vans are less than 30 years old?	This is a good question and GORCC will consider this issue, seeking independent industry advice on the best process for this.

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
Do these same safety standards apply to casuals? Is inconsistent!	Very similar safety standards do apply. Casual camping rules are slightly different due to the nature of this group as short term campers. However, their vans must be roadworthy and towable and they are required to meet a similar range of requirements as annuals and seasonals including space between campsites, towbars facing correct direction, fire extinguishers, blankets and smoke detectors etc.
What is the process for communicating regarding this policy?	GORCC will work to communicate all changes to the policy clearly and in a timely manner via the following methods: On the GORCC and TFCP website. Via emails to campers Via letters to campers Via word of mouth (park management talking to campers) Via the TCCC group Please ensure all your details are up to date at the park office
Cabins aren't movable - why should the fire safety rule (of towable vans) apply to us.	Cabins are actually moveable structures (movable dwellings); however, it is correct that it is unlikely that they would be able to be moved quickly in a fire. Cabins aren't required to be moved in case of fire because they only take up 6% of the park. Vans, on the other hand, take up a large percentage of park space and removing them helps to reduce fire spread, lessening fire risk and intensity.
What about those annuals who already had to move due to management changes? Our vans are towable and in good condition.	This previous move was ordered by management and was not the choice of the campers; therefore, we will consider some allowance for these individuals. GORCC will discuss this at the Committee level and look at solutions and possible time extensions.
Rules should be consistent with seasonals and annuals	At a minimum, GORCC CEO Richard Davies has committed to annuals that they will be given more time to replace their vans. Annuals will be given at least 18months to replace their vans (in which case they would need to be replaced by November 2015). The subcommittee (March meeting) will also discuss the issue further to see if any other amendments can be made. It should be noted that state policy differentiates annuals/TMPs from seasonals as TMP vans are more permanent - they remain in the park for many years exposed to a corrosive seaside environment. Many are also un-towable. This will all be taken into consideration by the sub-committee. GORCC will look to put the issue to the committee for consideration/discussion. This will happen at the 30 march Sub-committee meeting.

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
Why should the rule be different for seasonals and annuals?	GORCC is going to discuss this issue at the Sub-Committee meeting in March and consider whether or not the rule can be made the same. However it should be noted that state policy differentiates annuals from seasonals and vans are more permanent - they are sitting here for years in a corrosive environment. Many are un-towable.
Safety/quality criteria should be standard across both groups	As above
It should be the same for seasonal and annuals regarding quality v. ageIt is quality and safety that is important.	As above
Just because its young don't mean its better - I want to keep my renovated, older, better van on my annual site.	As above
If you do bring in the criteria check for annuals, can we get on-site assessments? For some vans it might be difficult to get them off- site?	As above
Annuals need more time - we weren't aware of the rule and don't have the money to replace our van	As above

ISSUE 2: PARK COMMUNICATION WITH CAMPERS

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
Communication is poor, inconsistent, confusing and doesn't reach everyone. The letter was sent to some and not others and didn't make sense.	Jane Lovejoy, GORCC's Community Liaison Manager, has committed to overseeing communications from this point forward. Jane and the Marketing Communications Coordinator Justine will work with park staff to improve this issue and to ensure that communication is sent out via multiple methods and is clear and consistent.
Wording in the recent letter was upsetting and confusing	GORCC acknowledges that this letter was not worded well enough, was upsetting, confusing and needed improvement. The distribution issue was also GORCC's fault and we will look to rectify this in future. Jane Lovejoy, GORCC's Community Liaison Manager, has committed to overseeing communications from this point forward. Jane and the Marketing Communications Coordinator Justine will work with park staff to improve this issue and to ensure that communication is sent out via multiple methods and is clear and consistent.
Rules are poorly communicated and need amending in general - they are confusing and inconsistent	GORCC has received feedback that some park rules are confusing and may need some amendment. In response, GORCC's Strategic Planning Manager will be heading up a review of park rules taking into consideration all the feedback received from both Lorne Campers at the recent Open House and through their submissions and also feedback received at a recent meeting with campers in Torquay. GORCC will also liaise with other bodies such as the CFA and review State Government guidelines to ensure the rules are consistent with all relevant documents.

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
We feel that communication from the park has been unfriendly	As detailed above, Jane Lovejoy, GORCC's Community Liaison Manager, has committed to overseeing and supporting park communications. Jane and the Marketing Communications Coordinator Justine will work with park staff to improve this issue. Jane and Justine will be working with the park managers to support them to and increase their skills in this area and to offer more face to face communication opportunities for campers. Further training will also be sought for office staff.
We need some kind of log where we can post issues/maintenance reports and know what has been reported and what has been dealt with.	We are working on creating some form of log that will service campers as suggested. This will be organised by the Easter period.
We need another meeting - to reconvene and discuss progress	A meeting will be scheduled for the Easter period where GORCC can again meet with campers regarding progress on the actions outlined in this report.

ISSUE 3: CONSULTATION WITH CAMPERS AND PARK PLANNING (E.G. MASTER PLAN AND FUTURE PLANS)

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
There is a consultation issue - we need a better consultation process	GORCC acknowledges that in the past consultation has not been sufficient. We are ensuring that consultation occurs on all major plans and that communication is clear and consistent by appointing Jane, GORCC's Community Liaison Manager, to oversee park communications from this point forward.
The new amenities block is worse than the old one - we need consultation in future on these kind of projects	Yes, GORCC agrees and acknowledges that this amenities block is not ideal. Future projects will be designed by a different designer and consultation will occur on the plans to ensure camper input is considered.

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
Is this 30 year policy a ploy for more cabins? Are there plans for more cabins in the park? We think you want to replace our sites with cabins.	There are no plans for further cabins. State Government best practice guidelines state that the maximum percentage of cabins a Crown land caravan park can have is 10-15% of the park. Currently, cabins at the Torquay Foreshore Caravan Park take up 6% of the park; however there are no plans to construct or install any more at this point in time.
Is there a master plan for the park that we can see? If so, can we be consulted?	The most recent master plan recently expired (2013). Plans are usually given around a 5 year life by DEPI. A new master planning process will begin once the Lorne Foreshore Master Planning process has been completed (expected around 2015). This future planning process will involve extensive consultation with campers.

ISSUE 4: POLICY REGARDING TENTS ON SITES

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
	This rule does apply to all seasonals and annuals however we can understand how it appears inconsistent as enforcing it has proven very challenging, meaning campers are erecting tents without permission.
Rules are inconsistent - one for some, one for others.	Casuals are allowed to have a tent on their site – but they can only have a tent or a van, not both. Capacity limits also apply to casuals – they can only have 4 adults or 2 adults and 4 children occupying the site.
	The reason for the tent rule is that the park has a fixed capacity for services. Resources need to be managed and the issue is overloading of sites.
Can this rule be reviewed and permits given if the campers adhere to requirements?	While we understand that campers would like to see this rule amended, GORCC will be upholding the rule. The reason for the tent rule is that the park has a fixed capacity for services. Resources need to be managed and the issue is overloading of sites.
	GORCC is not going to amend the rule to allow for tents but cap numbers occupying a site because we do not have the staff to

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC	
	enforce this and don't believe it is operationally viable or appropriate to check numbers on every site and inspect tents.	
Can it be just about the numbers rather than the tents?	See above	
Why can't tents be used on site?	See above	

ISSUE 5: GENERAL/OTHER ISSUES

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
We need better sullage management	GORCC has received feedback from a range of campers that they wish to see sullage infrastructure in the park. While ultimately it would be great to have this installed, at this point this is not a top priority for GORCC. GORCC has investigated the potential costs and this would cost several million dollars. We believe there are currently more urgent needs in the park and that amenity blocks are more cost effective to both install and maintain.
How is asbestos in the toilets being managed? Communication is required regarding asbestos in the parks in general.	An audit was completed in early 2013 by a qualified hygienist and all facilities have sign posted in accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004. All asbestos in the park is in good condition and does not pose a risk. Contractors are alerted to the location of asbestos in the park and asbestos is tagged/labelled.

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
We are concerned about the safety of the gas tank near the playground - how is this being managed?	The gas tank is subject to regular pressure tests and we have no safety concerns as it was tested recently. Eventually we would like to see natural gas in the park.
Is GORCC concerned about 'free campers' ? What controls are placed on this?	Yes GORCC is concerned about this issue Shire controls by-laws which state that no free camping is available on the coast GORCC manages. Shire local laws officers have the authority to enforce this.
How is our money being spent on the foreshore that we use?	GORCC currently generates about \$5 million in direct revenue annually with 80 per cent coming from our two caravan parks. The remaining 20 per cent is derived from a range of sources including lease, licence and permit fees, trampoline and pool charges, and fee-for-service delivery. In addition, our revenue is often supplemented by government grants for special projects along with the occasional donation. We expend the majority of our direct revenue on looking after our coastal reserves and operating and maintaining our caravan parks while any grants and donations income is used for specific projects and environmental work. More information on our income and expenditure is detailed on our website where you can also find past annual reports. The 2012/2013 report will also be added to the website shortly.
Please address the steps - next ones closest to lifesaving steps, they are in disrepair	These steps were repaired by our Outdoor Works Team immediately following the meeting. Should there be any foreshore maintenance issues, please contact the GORCC office on (03) 5220 5055 or info@gorcc.com.au to report them.
The park is becoming increasingly unaffordable - this doesn't meet the equity/affordability requirements set out by the State Government	GORCC understands that campers feel their fees are going up too quickly. We do take this into consideration when setting our prices/fees. We benchmark park tariffs against 10 other similar coastal parks and believe we are within the correct range.

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
What about road maintenance? We are being asked to spend money - you need to spend money too.	Road maintenance is an important issue and one which we are looking to address further. Several million dollars have been spent over the last few years to upgrade park infrastructure, including \$50,000 on road maintenance in 2013/2014. We will allocate further funding to road resurfacing in 2015 as part of an ongoing program.
The TCCC gave GORCC rule changes/amendments to consider and these were not incorporated by GORCC. Many of the changes may have avoided the issues now facedcan GORCC revisit and consider this?	Simon Coverdale, GORCC's Strategic Planning Manager will be heading up a review of rules in consultation with TCCC to ensure they are appropriate and consistent. TCCC input and suggestions regarding the rules were considered when they were previously given to the Committee; however we are happy to revisit them and discuss them further as part of this new review process.
Why was the TCCC Not involved in this policy creation?	GORCC acknowledges that while contact has been maintained with the TCCC that further consultation is required in future and will be discussing the policy at length with the TCCC. Please also see above.
The park is in poor condition - what money is going into the park?	GORCC acknowledges that in the past there has been underinvestment in the park. The current Committee policy is to invest \$1m per year into the parks.
Can our annexes be widened?	Annexes are not allowed to be widened. There is a standard, acceptable size for all annexes.
Is the ballot coming back?	No, while we acknowledge that campers are concerned about turnover policies due to past State Government policy that required a ballot system, this policy is not related to turnover. The Committee believes that healthy, sufficient natural turnover is already occurring in the park, and the State Government has not indicated that any turnover or ballot policy is to be re-introduced.

QUESTION OR CONCERN	RESPONSE FROM GORCC
Why are fees increasing higher than CPI each year?	While we are endeavouring to keep tariffs at an affordable level and while we hear camper concerns about fees, we have required fees to be increased to ensure we can meet requirements such as maintaining assets and reinvesting into parks and the coast. In 08/09 we acknowledge that there was a sharp increase. This was because permit fees had been undervalued and not increased in many years. We work to benchmark ourselves against other similar parks to ensure we are within an appropriate, standard range.

PROVIDING GORCC WITH FEEDBACK ON THIS REPORT

Feedback on this report is welcomed, and campers are invited to communicate with GORCC if they feel that a question or concern has been missed or if anything in this report is an inaccurate account of what occurred at the session on January 18.

Please also get in touch if you wish to clarify something in this report or if you find something in this report in any way unclear.

All suggestions and comments will be considered and incorporated where possible and appropriate into a final version of this report.

Please ensure all comments/suggestions are sent to jane.l@gorcc.com.au by COB Friday 14 February 2014.

STAYING INFORMED

While GORCC can communicate with campers via the park office and park databases, GORCC is looking ensure everyone who wishes to stay informed has a correct and up to date email address on file.

Campers are invited to send their email addresses to Jane Lovejoy, GORCC's Community Liaison Manager to subscribe to receive operational updates. This may mean you receive some messages twice, but will hopefully help to ensure that when GORCC has information to distribute as many people as possible are reached.

To get on the list, contact jane.l@gorcc.com.au or call Jane at the GORCC office (03) 5220 5055.