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Ms Lyndel Gray
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Resolved to publish Yes / No

Opening Statement

Our Association represents the interests of over 650 businesses associated with all aspects of the caravan, camping and manufactured housing industry in NSW.

In the year ending March 2013, in NSW there were 10.6 million domestic visitor nights spent in commercial caravan parks or camp grounds by 2.2 million visitors

27% of holiday nights in regional NSW are accommodated by caravan parks and commercial camp grounds, making our industry a key player in regional tourism in the State.

Our Association has 450 member parks, with around 50,000 short term and camp sites available each night. The average occupancy rate for parks is 54%

Our member parks operate under NSW legislation that sets the stringent rules under which commercial caravan parks operate. Caravan parks in NSW are required to have a dump point if they are in a location that is connected to sewer. There are also safety requirements including those about separation of tents and vans to protect against the spread of fire. These laws help ensure the preservation of the environment and the safety of guests/customers.

A major issue that we wish to highlight is the proliferation of non-compliant camping which is having a major detrimental impact on the caravan park industry.

Non-Compliant camping entails the overnight stay in areas not designated for this purpose. We want to clearly make the point that complaint + free camp sites exist in locations across the State, and we have no issue with these at all.

Our issue is where areas of land are being used or promoted as camp sites, but without any formal approvals for that type of use. In many instances these free services to visitors appear to be sanctioned by Councils through their lack of enforcement of land use requirements.

It is our contention that the continued use of these non-compliant facilities is having a detrimental effect on existing and compliant caravan parks. If this is not addressed it will lead to the withdrawal of caravan parks and camping grounds as tourism infrastructure.

Caravan parks are very important small businesses in regional towns. They employ local people, pay local rates, and buy goods and services locally. Recent research by BDO, undertaken on behalf of the industry, shows that for every \$1 taken by a caravan park, \$1.38 in economic benefit flows on to the local economy.

However, it's simply not possible for compliant businesses to compete when services are being provided free of charge, or provided at a rate that simply not commercial.

Caravan park owners invest significant capital into their businesses. They add to the appeal of a local township and refer their guests to other local businesses, such as restaurants, attractions and tours.

We are not asking for special protections, just an equal playing field to secure the long-term viability of the caravan park industry as an important component of the tourism infrastructure in NSW.

Ends