

Beckingham, Vanessa

From: Lorna Elliss
Sent: Monday, 20 April 2009 10:41 AM
To: Committee, Economics & Industry Standing
Subject: Inquiry into the Provision, Use and Regulation of Caravan Parks (and Camping Grounds) in Western Australia
Attachments: 09.04.19-INQUIRY CARAVAN PKS.rtf

Attention: Dr M.D. Nahan, MLA

Dear Dr Nahan

Attached is my submission relating to the above matter. A signed original will follow in the mail.

Yours sincerely

 Lorna Elliss

20/04/2009

BOB AND LORNA ELLISS

19 April, 2009

The Principal Research Officer
Economics and Industry Standing Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Attention: Dr M.D. Nahan, MLA
Email: laeisc@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Sir

Inquiry into the Provision, Use and Regulation of Caravan Parks (and Camping Grounds) in Western Australia

My husband and I have a particular interest in caravan parks having been for the past 18 years semi-permanent residents of Turner Caravan Park in Augusta and also having had many holidays over the years in caravan parks throughout Western Australia, in Australia generally, and also a couple of years ago had a self-drive holiday in New Zealand staying mainly in caravan parks.

We believe there is a strong demand for the retention of caravan parks.

Turner Caravan Park

Turner Caravan Park is owned by the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River. The caravan park is situated on 2 parcels of land: Lot 858 C/T 1952/688 and Reserve 30778, being a total land area of 9.06 hectares.

The town of Augusta was first settled in 1830. The park got its name from the Turner family who were first settlers in Augusta and arrived on the "Emily Taylor" on 2 May 1830 along with the Bussell, Molloy, Dawson, Heppingstone, Herring families and a small number of other pioneers. It is recorded that James Woodward Turner built a home for his family called "Albion House" on land within the above reserve. There is a plaque in the caravan park in front of a fig tree which was planted by the Turner family on the site where the Turner family home stood. The plaque reads as follows:

"Old Settlement"
Original Name of Turner Park
Part of
J.W. Turner's Grant "C"
1830".

Most of the early pioneers left the settlement at Augusta in the 1840s due to unavoidable hardships and the Turner family went to the Swan in 1849 when Augusta was deserted. The above "Old Settlement" was gifted to the Road Board.

Turner Caravan Park is bordered by forest, has a creek running through it and many lovely old paperbark trees, eucalypts (including karri trees), a number of fig trees as well as the one mentioned above, and peppermint trees and is on the edge of the Blackwood River near the river mouth. It is a beautiful park

and a great asset to the town, and is home to a great variety of bird life. Kangaroos also roam through the park in the evening, except in the few weeks of the year at peak holiday time when the park is full of campers and holiday-makers. The park should be left in its natural state to continue to be enjoyed by residents of Augusta, holiday-makers and visitors to the region.

In July 2008 the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River produced for public comment a Feasibility Report prepared by "Brighthouse" for proposed redevelopment of Turner Caravan Park which would have a significant impact on permanent and semi-permanent tenants of the park, campers and also residents of the town. There are approximately 40 permanent and semi-permanent sites in the park and I think approximately 200 camping sites. Most of the permanent and semi-permanent sites are on Lot 858. At present the Shire has no on-site accommodation available for tourists and would like to build deluxe chalets etc. It is keen to proceed with redevelopment of the park in the form proposed by "Brighthouse" and is presently preparing a Business Plan. Instead of building a few chalets in a cleared area of the park which is presently unused (which I don't think anyone would object to), it is proposing a major redevelopment of the caravan park which includes a park home cluster, deluxe cabins, privately owned holiday homes and residential park homes. A development of this size would destroy the natural beauty of the park, and in my opinion it should be retained in its present state particularly because of its historical value to the Shire and as the land had been gifted to the then Road Board.

About 2 years ago "Doonbanks" which was a privately owned very popular caravan park in town and had some on-site chalets for hire, closed down. The land is prime real estate in Augusta, but no development has yet commenced on the site, and I believe the zoning of the land has changed. There is a lot of development activity in town and construction of deluxe holiday apartments. The real estate market is very slow due to the current financial downturn and there are a lot of properties for sale. The Shire is wanting to compete with private enterprise at a time when there is a marked downturn in the market and would put ratepayers' funds at risk if the proposed venture is unsuccessful. In any case I believe the Shire would be acting improperly to cash in on Turner Caravan Park's high real estate value in a large redevelopment of the land which had been gifted to the Shire and has great heritage significance.

The point I am endeavouring to make is that generations of families have had annual camping holidays in the park some going back 40 years or more. All of us wish to continue having relaxing affordable holidays in Augusta. Families love camping holidays and it is a great experience for children, and retirees fulfilling long held dreams of caravanning holidays around the State of Western Australia and Australia generally, and all hope and expect that caravan parks will be retained as holiday destinations and not become a thing of the past. The recent trend for caravan park owners to cash in on high real estate prices and sell off or develop land into chalets, cabins and residential park homes is most regrettable. A large proportion of the population is able to enjoy relatively inexpensive holidays in caravan parks using their own facilities, but a holiday in deluxe cabins and the like is out of reach for many. In all major tourist areas, including Augusta, there are holiday apartments and hotel/motel accommodation available for the high end of the market.

We pay \$3,100 annually for the privilege of having a caravan on-site at Turner Caravan Park, which includes 10 weeks' use of our caravan at the park. As we have 4 children who are married and have families, the Shire receives additional income when our children join us for holidays and bring their families for a tenting holiday and pay camping fees. We often have friends or extended family staying with us in our caravan for which the Shire receives extra income over and above our annual rent.

The great attraction for holiday-makers to Turner Caravan Park is the fact that it is on the river mouth and families are able to enjoy the river and ocean, and the natural ambience of the park including the flora and fauna in and around the park. Children have the opportunity to fish off jetties or at the beach, swim and play in the river and ocean, and enjoy walks and rides along the scenic pathway along the foreshore. There is so much to do because of the natural environment that no artificial entertainment often provided in other caravan parks is necessary. Turner Caravan Park is unique in that regard and the Shire doesn't need to provide entertainment, shops etc because of the park's close proximity to all amenities in the town of Augusta. It is a short walk to the main shopping precinct and close to tennis courts, children's playground and an activity area which has trampolines, mini golf and indoor games.

The Shire over time has neglected expenditure on amenities in the park. If the Shire didn't own the park, I feel sure that the ablution block on Lot 858 would be condemned. The Managers of the park do a commendable job maintaining the park land (lawns and gardens) and keeping the park in top condition, but the ablution blocks are very old and the one closest to our caravan needs replacing. In recent years an attractive camp kitchen and barbeque area has been built, but that is the only new facility in the park.

Apart from Turner Caravan Park my husband and I have enjoyed many holidays in other caravan parks. Generally we have taken our own caravan, but we have also stayed in cabins and on-site vans. It is convenient if caravan parks offer some on-site accommodation, but most people enjoy using their own caravans and/or camping equipment. On our trip to New Zealand we had a self-drive holiday and stayed mainly in cabins in caravan parks. We were particularly impressed with a caravan park in Greymouth on the South Island. It had nice modern cabins and entertainment areas and laundry facilities at the back of the park, and then an area for caravanners and campers on the beach front. We were very satisfied with our accommodation which was only a short walk from the beach, and the layout of the park was a sensible design with the larger more dense accommodation at the rear of the park.

We urge you to apply pressure or legislate if necessary to ensure retention of caravan parks and camping grounds in the State of Western Australia and not allow Councils to change the zoning of existing caravan parks and grant planning approval for redevelopment, so that the general public especially families and retirees, can continue to have affordable holidays.

All holiday resorts throughout WA have a very large assortment of accommodation to cater for wealthy tourists, and it is essential to retain affordable camping holiday sites for average families and retirees.

Yours sincerely,

Lorna Elliss