

# TOWN OF PORT HEDLAND



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

Our Ref: DE: 19/01/0002  
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Dear Sir, Madam,

## **SUBMISSION PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY – PROVISION, USE & REGULATION OF THE CARAVAN PARKS (AND CAMPING GROUNDS) IN W.A.**

Currently, the Town of Port Hedland has three registered caravan parks being the Blackrock Caravan Park, Port Hedland Caravan Park and the Cooke Point Holiday Park. The Town has also approved a seasonal, thirty site camping ground at the Port Hedland Golf Club to act as an overflow area for the parks.

In recent years, Port Hedland has experienced significant and sustained iron ore export growth. This growth has shown no sign of slowing even with the worldwide economic downturn, with BHP Billiton Iron Ore commencing their Rapid Growth Project Five (RGP5) to increase exports and Fortescue Metals Group Limited (FMGL) now exporting out of Port Hedland.

These huge construction projects have put enormous pressure on local accommodation facilities. To put even more pressure on available tourist sites FMGL purchased the South Hedland Caravan Park (239 sites) and gained approval to develop a motel which is now largely used for construction workers accommodation.

A survey of the local parks was completed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009 which shows the sites approved at each facility and the amount of vacant sites available at that time. When reviewing these figures it must be remembered that at the time of the survey our main tourist season had not commenced being May to September each year.

### Blackrock Caravan Park

143 available sites with 35 vacancies

### Port Hedland Caravan Park

183 available sites with 28 vacancies

### Cooke Point Holiday Village

195 available sites with 59 vacancies

### Port Hedland Golf Club

Golf season has not started however 30 sites will be available this season.

Therefore, we have a total of 551 sites available with 152 vacant including the Golf Club. This equates to a 72.4% occupancy rate at present outside our prime tourist times.

At present the majority of the caravan park accommodation is taken up by permanent residents or utilised as contract worker accommodation. The Town is in the process of developing a 1200 person worker camp at the airport to ease the pressure on local accommodation facilities.

The Town is working with key stakeholders on a range of initiatives to improve local residential options including, working with LandCorp to secure the quick release of land, processing development applications in a timely manner, rezoning land to allow density development, supporting an extensive urban renewal project in South Hedland, facilitating the redevelopment of the old detention centre into accommodation units and encouraging residential property owners to rent out vacant rooms in their houses.

The above information has been supplied by way of background and to answer the specific issues under investigation by the Committee please be advised as follows:-

1. The performance of the industry in Port Hedland I feel is generally of a high standard as the parks seem to be quite profitable. One issue that seems to be constant is the appointment of new managers that have little or no knowledge of the regulations.

As one can appreciate a high percentage of the workforce in Port Hedland is transient in nature and Managers of parks tend to turn over quite regularly. Some Managers have a reasonable knowledge of the Regulations however others have little or no knowledge of the regulations which can lead to significant compliance issues during inspections of the facilities.

2. In the Pilbara the development of caravan sites is very expensive as the cost of labour hire is often cost prohibitive and the installation of services can be a time consuming process.

3. The supply and demand for long and short stay sites is strong in Port Hedland and the shortage of short stay sites during the tourist season is of concern. The Town has approved emergency 24 hour parking at the racecourse in recent years to accommodate overnight tourist parking but this is not a long term solution.

One point that could be raised here is that the Regulations do not define what is a long stay site or a short stay site. It is generally accepted that a long term site has ensuite facilities or a sewer connection point however this is not clarified in the Regulations.

4. It is considered that the introduction of the Regulations has generally seen an upgrade in parks around the state with the introduction of minimal acceptable standards. With permanent occupation of parks now permitted, the park home industry has gained momentum.

There seems to be a trend with Park owners wanting to develop more permanent accommodation on sites that have traditionally been used for tourist or short stay accommodation and this is proposed at our local parks. Traditionally, caravan parks were seen as short stay holiday accommodation however the amount of available sites seems to be diminishing. One cannot blame the Park owners for wanting to ensure the sustainability of their business however the tourism industry will rely on available sites for visitors to their area.

The Town is very concerned that available short term sites in Hedland will dry up completely and tourists will be forced to move on if sites are unavailable. While new developments can be controlled to a certain extent using the planning laws, ie 25% of sites are to remain short term in nature, this condition could quite easily be reversed at a State Administrative Tribunal hearing on appeal. Therefore, Local Government has no certainty in controlling short term sites.

In using the Regulations since their inception I have found the Regulations relatively easy to use and I would like to raise the following points for consideration if the Committee recommends any amendments to the Regulations.

- a) Clear clarification between long and short stay sites.
- b) There needs to be a mechanism that will ensure that caravan parks have sites available for tourist accommodation however, a change to the regulations to reflect this requirement could be seen as a restriction of trade and likely to be unpopular with the industry.
- c) The fee structure for the issue of licenses has not changed since the regulations have been introduced and regular CPI increases are required to keep license fees in line with inflation.
- d) A developing issue is the requirement for Park owners to comply with the Residential Tenancy Act for long term residents. While I have minimal knowledge of that particular Act I am aware that some local managers have issues when trying to evict problem tenants.

The Town appreciates the opportunity to comment and should you have any queries please contact the undersigned on 91589352.

Yours Faithfully



**Darryl Eastwell**  
**Manager Environmental Health**  
*Town Of Port Hedland*

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009