

30 July 2021

Attention: Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
West Perth WA 6005

RE: Petition No. 006 – Caravan and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997

Dear Committee Members

I refer my Petition (No.006) which was tabled in the Legislative Council on 11 May 2021 and your subsequent letter dated 03 June 2021 requesting a written submission regarding the issues raised in the aforementioned petition.

As stated in the petition wording, I, and many others from my community, believe that the current Caravan and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997 (Regulations) concerning the use and habitation of self-contained mobile dwellings, including, but not limited to tiny homes on wheels, caravans, motorhomes and the like, are redundant and no longer appropriate.

My petition asks that the committee investigate a review of the Regulations, and consider the modification of the regulations to:

1. Create a new term and meaning to accurately categorise self-contained mobile dwellings, including tiny homes on wheels, caravans and motorhomes, separate to non-self-contained trailers, recreational vehicles and tent-based camping. Self-contained mobile dwellings should not be classed and regulated as recreational vehicles, and should not be defined as “camping” while they are being inhabited on private property.
2. Introduce new provision for self-contained habitable vehicles and trailers to be inspected and certified as being self-contained (e.g. containing a chemical or composting toilet system) by a local government authority delegated health officer.
3. Under Part 2, Section 11(a): Exclude both non-self-contained and self-contained mobile dwellings from the 3 night per 28 consecutive night camping limit on private property. This exclusion is under the condition that there is a primary dwelling on the property with access to waste disposal services on site. In the case of non-self-contained mobile dwellings, evidence will need to be provided to the local health officer that there is dedicated access to a toilet and bathroom facilities.

The Regulations, dating from 1997, are inappropriate and should be modified to better reflect the standards, technology and features found in self-contained habitable vehicles and trailers (mobile dwellings).

Many modern mobile dwellings, in particular mobile dwellings colloquially known as “tiny homes on wheels”, are fully self-contained and present no or very little risk to public health and sanitation – of which was the guiding reason for the original Regulations back in 1997. Many modern mobile dwellings, especially ones designed for ongoing, long-term habitation, usually contain self-contained composting, chemical or incinerator toilet systems, bathrooms, grey water storage and filtered disposal systems, and have the ability to connect to rainwater tanks for fresh water sources.

As such, I believe that the good and honourable members of the Committee will agree with the petition that the current Regulations, which currently consider living in a self-contained mobile dwelling to be the same level of potential environmental impact and harm as permanent living in a tent, to be inappropriate and excessive.

It is believed that there are thousands of West Australians living permanently in mobile dwellings who are forced to live in secrecy and at constant risk of fines, displacement and other enforcement from local government authorities.

Considering that Western Australia is currently experiencing one of the worst housing shortages in many years, and that local businesses and primary producers are struggling to find and retain workers, due, in part, to housing shortages, I strongly believe that now is the time to bring these antiquated and inappropriate Regulations up to modern standards to allow people to live in approved mobile dwellings on privately owned land beyond the current 3 night per 28 consecutive night limit currently imposed on them.

I stress that any new Regulations or changes should be designed in a way that reduces as much red tape as possible, and makes the process of having a self-contained mobile dwelling a fast, painless and inexpensive process via a local government health officer inspection or similar.

Self-contained mobile dwellings, in particular tiny homes on wheels, are a growing alternative housing option for many people in the world. Western Australia must show that we, as a community, are progressive and forward thinking. We must support this new category of housing and remove unnecessary and redundant barriers to allow people to access affordable housing that suits their needs.

I thank the Committee for accepting my petition and for taking the time to read by submission. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Karl Stade

Attachment 1 – Example of a self-contained “tiny home on wheels”:

