

**ENCL:** NO

**DARWIN CITY COUNCIL**

**DATE:** 31/7/09

**REPORT**

**TO:** COMMUNITY & CULTURAL COMMITTEE  
SERVICES/OPEN

**APPROVED:** JB

**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER COMMUNITY &  
CULTURAL SERVICES

**APPROVED:** AF

**REPORT NO:** 09C0128 AF:kl

**COMMON NO:** 1601021

**SUBJECT:** REPORT ON ALTERNATIVES TO ILLEGAL CAMPING FOR  
TRAVELLERS VISITING DARWIN IN THE DRY SEASON

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**ITEM NO:**

**SYNOPSIS:**

This report provides an overview of the issue of illegal camping in the Darwin locale by dry season travellers and possible strategies to address it.

**GENERAL:**

**Previous Decision 20\1665 (16/6/09)**

That a report be prepared for Council on alternatives for people visiting Darwin during the Dry Season and who camp illegally in public areas.

**REPORT**

As a result of greater traveller numbers to Darwin, caravan parks are at capacity in the dry season causing some visitors to camp illegally, usually in the vicinity of the beaches in the northern suburbs.

There is significant endeavour by Council's Regulatory Services (RS) to regulate illegal campers. That is, from May until the date of this report, 248 infringements and 154 warnings were issued to illegal campers as the result of 14 RS initiatives undertaken by 6 officers on each occasion.

This level of commitment by Council does not, however, address the fundamental structural issue of a shortage of legal dry season alternatives evidenced in an article in a local community newspaper in early July regarding the capacity of caravan parks.

The article reports that Darwin caravan parks are already running at near-full capacity across the region whilst the manager of two caravan parks reports that both traveller parks had been running at full capacity for the past fortnight (and) that demand was outstripping available spaces in Darwin. The manager from another group of caravan parks similarly reported that those parks were also at near capacity with predominantly over-55s and retirees utilising them. The article further reports that a reserve open to caravans during the dry season is full.

Even when caravan parks are not full, costs to camp in them may be, or may be perceived to be, prohibitive to younger travellers. Charges are as follows:

Lee Point Caravan Park: UP (unpowered) = \$28, P (powered) = \$32

Malak Caravan Park: P only = \$35

KOA Caravan Park: P only = \$35

Shady Glen Tourist Park: UP = \$30, P = \$32

Hidden Valley Tourist Park: UP = \$30, P = \$39 (for two people)

One strategy to address the problem of illegal camping may be for fully self-contained caravans and mobile homes, etc, to utilise Council and privately owned car parks and thereby alleviate the lack of capacity.

However, advice from Council's Strategic Planner indicates that:

The NT Planning Scheme for Darwin zones across roads and streets so that in most cases Council's car parks would fall under the same zone as adjoining land. For example Council car parks in the Darwin CBD would be in the CBD zone. Car parks in residential areas would generally fall in the Single Dwelling Zone and car parks near public parks would be in the Public Open Space Zone. In all three of these above named zones "caravan parks" are a prohibited use. "Caravan parks" and "caravans" are defined in the Planning Scheme (refer to Clause 7.10 of the Scheme which provides clarity on where land can be used for caravan accommodation). Council car parks in the Tourist Commercial zone could allow "caravans" to be approved at the discretion of the Development Consent Authority. In conclusion the answer would mostly be "no" to using Council car parks for caravan or camper van type accommodation.

Notwithstanding this advice, Council could seek further clarification from the NT government regarding the prospect of an amendment to the Planning Scheme to mitigate the issue of illegal campers.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil.

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS:**

The issues addressed in this Report are in accordance with the following Goals/Strategies of the Darwin City Council 2008 – 2012 as outlined in the 'Evolving

Darwin Strategic Directions: Towards 2020 and Beyond:-

**Goal**

2 Enhance Darwin's Active, Positive and Flexible Lifestyle

**Outcome**

2.1 Improve urban enhancement around Darwin

**Key Strategies**

2.1.4 Provide a clean and liveable municipality

**Goal**

2 Enhance Darwin's Active, Positive and Flexible Lifestyle

**Outcome**

2.1 Improve urban enhancement around Darwin

**Key Strategies**

2.1.5 Participate and partner in activities that contribute to a safer Darwin

**Goal**

3 Assist Individuals and the Community Stay Connected with the Darwin Region

**Outcome**

3.1 Promote the use of public spaces

**Key Strategies**

3.1.1 Enhance public spaces and encourage greater use by the community

**Goal**

7 Demonstrate Effective, Open and Responsible Governance

**Outcome**

7.2 Display strong and effective leadership, within Council and across Government

**Key Strategies**

7.2.2 Display Council's leadership across all levels of Government

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil

**PUBLIC RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil

**COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS:**

Nil at this stage

**DELEGATION:**

Nil

**CONSULTATION:**

Nil

**PROPOSED PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS:**

Nil

**APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE**

Nil

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

THAT it be a recommendation to Council:-

- A. THAT Report Number 09C0128 AF:kl entitled Report on Alternatives to Illegal Camping for Travellers Visiting Darwin in the Dry Season., be received and noted.
- B. THAT a further report be prepared to advise Council regarding the benefits and implications of seeking an amendment to the NT Planning Scheme to allow for the use of car parks for traveller mobile home usage.
- C. THAT Council invites representatives of the caravan park industry to meet with Council to discuss the issue of illegal campers.

**ANNIE FARRELL**  
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**GENERAL MANAGER COMMUNITY &**  
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Any queries on this report may be directed to Annie Farrell on 5404