

EMERGENCY!



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In this issue: • [I spy with my little drone](#) • [Seeing the light in the dark](#) • [Don't fly through the Eyre](#)

Camping competitors seek common ground

Can van parks and free campers really be good neighbours?

The 'battle' between caravan-parks and what many see as the unfair competition posed by free camping areas is seemingly reaching fever pitch. Under pressure from parks, the council in Wagga, NSW, is the latest to consider ending free camping in the town.

Similar debates are taking place across the country as increasing numbers of self-contained travellers balk at paying for facilities they say they do not need.

The author of a recent drive tourism report says it is a red hot issue and, in some cases, van parks have taken legal action against local authorities. "Councils are the meat in the sandwich here," said Russell Boswell, who spent months researching the issue and hosting workshops in numerous Queensland communities. "On one hand, we have budget travellers with their own showers and power sources and, on the other, van parks who need to repay the bank."

Mr Boswell, the author of Drive North Queensland's Touring Markets Workshop Report, concludes that many van parks may need to adapt



Most free campers also spend some time in caravan parks

in order to thrive. He told the GNT that some parks have already decided to offer a suite of accommodation options including, for example, unpowered sites for \$10 a night. He said another possibility was for van parks to become involved in managing council-provided low-cost camping areas. Some have also chosen to enhance the social side of van park life by hosting sausage sizzles, pancake breakfasts, campfires or bush poet nights. And, with the number of registered RVs in Australia predicted to increase by 100% by 2025, Mr Boswell insists opportunity still knocks for parks willing to move with the times. There is also some evidence that where local authorities have wholeheartedly embraced free camping, caravan parks have actually benefited. It

seems grey nomads initially drawn to an area by free campsites will often move to a van park to wash and power up. "Nonetheless, you can understand the anxiety of van parks running at 25% occupancy who see scores of vans camping by the river for free while the council builds toilets there," Mr Boswell said. "There are many local factors at play in deciding what the best approach in a particular area is but, as a broad rule of thumb, it seems the bigger the town the harder it is for them to embrace free camping." Meanwhile, the fear in some quarters is that, with upwards of 200 van parks closing in recent years, there may not be enough capacity for grey nomads when the predicted 2025 RV boom arrives.

[Click to comment](#)

Readers reckon rangers require more power

While we may not be quite ready yet to turn our national park rangers into mini-Rambos, there is a feeling that they need more powers to keep rowdy campers in line.

In the last GNT, we highlighted the case of the US park ranger who used a stun gun to subdue a walker who didn't have his dog on a leash ... and we asked:

"Could our own rangers do with more firepower?" figuratively speaking, of course. Some 57% of poll respondents said 'yes' and 43% 'no'. "They should just keep managing the national parks and provide good commonsense rules and regulations," said Gavan and Maria.

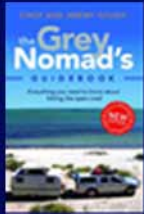
Maca though was in favour ... but cautiously so. "As long as they use commonsense and don't become bloody little Hitlers," he said. The give-them-more-power brigade were however unanimous in their identification of the underlying issue.

"There are too many idiots and campers who flaunt the rules and make life difficult for those of us who are trying to enjoy our great country," wrote Terry.

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Characters of the Road

A few hot tips from a keen traveller and firefighter

Dave (aka Smokeydk), 58, and wife Rosie live in Old Noarlunga, South Australia, but are equally at 'home' on the open road.

Do you still work?

I have been a firefighter with the SA Country Fire Service for the past 29 years. Rosie also works full time but we try to go away for at least seven days a month.

What rig do you travel in?

We used to have a camper trailer but now have a 2010 Goldstream Mini Caravan. It is small (12ft) but has single beds one being 6'9" long ... which is great for me being 6'5" tall. We cook, and spend all of our time outside, only using the van for sleeping in. It is towed by a 2005 NP turbo diesel Pajero ... you wouldn't notice the van is on the back!

Any plans to travel full-time?

Hopefully in the next two years. We want to see so much more. We will probably start off with three-month trips, then ones a little longer.

Where do you like to camp?

We camp mostly at bush camps ... on farms ... cost around \$15 a night for showers and flushing toilets. We have solar panels and a battery so we don't need 240v power.



Dave and Rosie spend most of their time outside the van

Should we be more bushfire aware?

If you're planning a trip in a high-fire risk area, there's a thread on the [Forum](#) that has links to fire service sites that give information on current incidents and fire bans. It's well worth spending some time checking it out before travelling into risk areas. If you're not on the internet listen to the ABC Radio and, while thinking about fires, check your fire extinguisher and replace your smoke alarm battery. Park your van in a clear area, and look up! Gum trees can drop branches in heat ... you don't want one landing on your van or tug.

Lifestyle highlights?

Getting out and exploring new places and meeting other grey

nomads..We have met so many people.and a lot of GN Forum members, too.

Hobbies?

We both enjoy photography.

Favourite place to camp?

South-east South Australia. You can be by the ocean or inland rural areas and it's mostly flat country.

Scariest nomad experience?

While travelling you have got to expect the unexpected ... animals on road or vehicles on the wrong side coming around blind corners.

Any advice?

Don't rush from point A to point B ... stop and smell the roses. So many are on tight schedules that they don't see where they have been. Get out and do it before you get too old.

Nomads in Brief

Women 'safer'?

South Australia's RAA Insurance says women motorists make 6% less claims for crashes than men. New data reveals that male drivers make 53% of claims compared to women's 47%. "Women probably take a little more time to make that judgment call," said RAA claims manager Tony Phillips. There are almost 40,000 fewer SA women drivers than men.

Roo record

Australia's kangaroo population could reach 52 million by next year. The Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia says wet weather has caused the record explosion in numbers. It says the high Aussie dollar means roo shooting is no longer viable.

Height of rudeness

Motorhomers in the UK are enraged by what they see as discrimination against them. A new \$1m bird observatory on the Lincolnshire coast will have height barriers installed, preventing access to many RVs. "What are the council afraid of?" asked motorhomer, Sheri Burditt.

Forest fallout

A plan to close off parts of Arizona forests to campers has come under fire from police. US sheriffs say it will lead to conflict and will criminalise campers who have enjoyed the area for generations.

QUIZ CORNER

GRAB A CUPPA AND TEST YOUR GREY MATTA

It pays to stay aware of this while travelling



DO YOU KNOW

1. In which NSW town are you not allowed to eat apples?
2. Where in Queensland are romantics certain to get a date?
3. In which Queensland town are there no short arms?
4. What is the road distance from Cairns to Perth?
A) 3,256km B) 4,450km C) 5,990km
5. Which iconic road must you travel to view Manning Gorge?

(Answers on page 4)

the Grey Nomad Times

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Letters to the Editor **Share your thoughts with fellow nomads**

Dear Editor,
 Re: Elephants for the Outback (GNT: Issue 13). Well it's been blackberries, foxes, rabbits, cane toads, and I know I've missed a few man-introduced solutions for problems man has created, but please ... elephants and rhinos! Even if they did introduce these species, have they considered the huge impact on tourism in these areas? It would be horrendous because the public would be extremely restricted as to where they would be able to go in this vast beautiful land! Get back to the drawing board.

Trish & Nev

Dear Editor,
 Say what - is it April 1? Let's leave them in the wilds of Africa.

Peter

Dear Editor,
 Another cane toad?

Antonia

Dear Editor,
 At least elephants would be easier to see and not as quick as cane toads ... but you would need a very large golf club!

Donald (Wingnut)

Dear Editor,
 Control by sterilisation or contraceptives? Try putting a condom on an elephant!

Peter H

Dear Editor,
 We should not dismiss any ideas for control of the bushlands before exploring the idea. An instance such as the Snowy Mountains grazing where farmers are no longer allowed to graze their cattle there is just asking for more bushfires.

Jeff

Dear Editor,
 Re: van park owner's dilemma letter (GNT: Issue 13). Glenda obviously felt saddened and

stymied by the abnormal response given by the father of the child she spoke with about NOT wearing a helmet whilst cycling. Having to suffer the abusive indignity of being reprimanded and put down by a know-it-all, obnoxious and uncaring parent must surely rank high as an anathema to the majority of our species, including myself. Thank you, Glenda, for being a caring, kind person, and thank you for sharing your story.

Poppa

Dear Editor,
 We recently had our family reunion at a great park at Nambucca Heads where our grandchildren thoroughly enjoyed riding the hire bikes. They were supplied with helmets - which they wore - and ended up with head lice, not a tragedy but a salutary lesson to think about. Shared helmets do have risks.

Valerie

Dear Editor,
 Re: shower stealers (GNT: Issue 13). Most caravans/motorhomes have showers on board these days - also a lot of carry generators or have solar power - so there is no need for this to happen. The solution to the problem could be that the caravan parks institute a special rate for the grey nomads. i.e. \$10 for a special visit of 3-4 hours, just to do the little clean-ups like washing clothes, having showers etc.

Roberta

Dear Editor,
 I used to reside in a small western Queensland town with a rainwater tank visible from the street where travelling nomads would park. After catching two freeloaders attempting to

fill their 20l bottles from the tank I promptly locked the tap. That tank had to last me between wet seasons. Now that I am a nomad myself I too have noticed the practices of freeloaders pinching water and using facilities without paying. Shame on them! I reckon that every dollar I spend in a small community helps that community exist, so I buy all fuel and groceries locally and stay in the local caravan park. It all helps.

Mal G

Dear Editor,
 I am coming to the end of my work as a registered nurse, still healthy and fit, and am thinking of setting off into the far hills with my dog and van. What is it like travelling alone? Where do people meet? Is it possible to travel with others and meet in towns along the way? It could be a very lonely trip - that is what scares me. Do any of you travel with a dog? I would appreciate some advice.

Prudence

Dear Editor,
 While crossing the Nullarbor where does one empty one's toilet cassette if no road houses or public toilets allow it? Also crossing the Nullarbor, is there a published list of road houses that sell LPG for automobiles? (By crossing the Nullarbor I mean Ceduna to Norseman) Have enjoyed your efforts immensely. Keep it up.

John D

Dear Editor,
 Re: Jaclyn and Heidi column (GNT: Issue 13). I think Heidi & Jaclyn have missed the simple answer to Tammy's dilemma. Tammy states she likes watercolour painting. Jim

obviously catches his fish in the water. Tammy should go with Jim and paint the colour of the water. She might need to stock up on extra blue, green and a little white paint. She could also open Jim's beer.

Carl (Airgun)

Dear Editor,
 I'm marking this day on my calendar. For once I have to agree with Heidi.

Brenda

Dear Editor,
 I was totally gobsmacked to read the letters. Hell, some of you really need to get a grip and a life! Heidi's comments are soooooo tongue in cheek. We were in our rig for three and a half years and met some remarkable people, and to read some of your comments on something so silly was amazing. It is her job to stir you up with her answers, and it is working a treat. Good onya Heidi, make me laugh. Relax folks and enjoy the ride.

Russ (Dreamcaster51)

Dear Editor,
 It will be VERY interesting to see if you publish this one!!! Come on, GNT readers - you don't SERIOUSLY believe that 'Heidi' is a real person, do you? Seems to me that 'she' is just the Editor's idea of 'playing the Devil's Advocate' to stir up a bit of interest. It seems it's working quite well and getting a lot of you quite hot under the collar! But, the grey nomad lifestyle is all about relaxation, so I doubt whether it's really very productive to upset people. Personally, Ed, I'd prefer that you didn't waste editorial space with this sort of rubbish. I just don't bother reading Heidi's comments any more.

Jules

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Gadgets of the Road
with Jezza

Even the most hardened of bush camping veterans has to admit to having had the odd 'twitchy' moment on at least one dark, spooky night in a lonely, lonely Outback spot. However much you tell yourself to go back to sleep, your over-active imagination sometimes just won't let you! Was that distant rumble the sounds of an approaching motorbike gang or just the far-off sound of the ocean? Was that rustling outside the van the arrival of an inquisitive possum or a half-demented man-hungry saltie? Was that voices I heard coming this way? In uncertain times, the last thing you want to do is draw attention to yourself by turning on a light or shining a torch at the marauding army of zombies encircling your rig ... so it's time to get out your night vision monocular! The compact NVMT Spartan



Do you really want to know what that noise was?

is designed for night-time observation and orientation, and its built-in IR Illuminator lights up your world, even in the most starless and moonless of nights. The NVMT's 2x magnification and wide field of view makes it a jumpy bush camper's best friend. Of course, for wildlife lovers this device will also bring the secret world of possums, dingoes, wombats and ... gulp ... nocturnal spiders and snakes to life. Will somebody put this thing back in its box? I don't want to know what's out there! And I'd rather burst than walk to the drop toilet in the dark!

We are assured that the NVMT Spartan night vision monocular cleverly combines enhanced ergonomics, optimal size/weight ratio and high quality optics. It is powered by a 3V Lithium CR123A battery and is therefore suitable for prolonged use. The device is water-resistant and is encased in durable rubber armour so it won't break if you drop it when you realise what horrors are out lurking in the gloom! Depending on the model selected, the Spartan retails in Australia for \$350-\$450 and has an approximate range of 150 metres.

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Website highlights

Spy-in-the-sky reveals naked truth

Recently, our website www.thegreynomads.com.au reported that Australia is to finance the launch of two new satellites ... raising questions about how the information gathered by the hardware orbiting the earth is used. Satellites can photograph Australia with enough clarity to pinpoint individual trees and animals, and are routinely used to study land use. But spy-in-the-sky technology is now getting even more up close and personal with drones - Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) - be-

ing trialled for agricultural monitoring in France. So, are we ever truly alone ... no matter how remote our campsite? And does it mean that those carefree days of nude sunbathing next to the van are in danger?

[Read more here](#)

SURVEY
Do satellites and drones mean the end of your nude Outback sunbathing sessions?

Yes No

Other website must-reads:

Water Woes
Does a poor drop drive you away?

Free Hit
Is Wagga's Wilks Park next?

Up in the air
Potential nomads fly away

Weekly Mailbag
Naked nomads get dressed to read

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Experience the magic in the Eyre

The Eyre Peninsula is an angler's ... and sightseer's ... dream



While South Australia's magnificent Eyre Peninsula is a 'surprise' Big Lap highlight for many, it is still an area that some 'Nullarbor-crossing-obsessed' nomads miss out on. With 2000 kilometres of sensational coastline, unbelievable scenery, fantastic fishing, superb national parks, and wonderful wildlife to discover, that is a huge mistake. Australia's 'Seafood Frontier' is bounded on the east by Spencer Gulf, the west by the Great Australian Bight, and the north by the Gawler Ranges. If you've just come from the west and the adventure of the Nullarbor, prepare yourself for another as you head south

from Ceduna. The stunning views come thick and fast as you travel past Laura Bay, Smoky Bay and on to picturesque Streaky Bay. This relaxed town boasts a jetty much beloved of anglers. The Westall Way is a top side trip that takes you off the Flinders Highway to discover great 'hidden' coastal spots such as High Cliff and Smooth Pool. Another superb drive out of Streaky Bay, north to Cape Bauer, offers high cliffs, sweeping ocean views and blowholes. The whole of the peninsula's wild west coast is spectacular and, if you time it right, you will see whales, not to mention sea lions at Point Labatt.



The Eyre Peninsula's coastline boasts soaring cliffs

Coffin Bay National Park and Lincoln National Park lie on either side of the southern tip of the V-shaped peninsula. Both deliver stunning coastal scenery ranging from ancient granite, limestone and sandstone cliffs to long white beaches and sand dunes. Lincoln National Park is just 20 kilometres from the peninsula's unofficial capital, Port Lincoln, where a lucrative fish farming industry is being developed. This fascinating town offers a number of great attractions, as well as the

opportunity to shop up. While the calm beaches and warm waters of the Spencer Gulf are the main attraction as you head up the east coast, the Koppio Hills scenic drive through farming country west of Tumby Bay is a great place to sample the oft-overlooked interior. In the peninsula's drier north cereal crops, sheep, and cattle hold sway while in the south water-intensive activities such as dairy farming and the developing wine industry are prominent. Heading north, fishermen will insist on stopping at Cowell, and museum buffs at Whyalla. This history-rich town really marks the end of your great Eyre Peninsula adventure ... or at least the end of *this* one ... because you'll almost certainly be back!

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ASK JACLYN and Heidi



Our experts solve your grey nomad etiquette dilemmas

Bush wacked

Dear Jaclyn and Heidi,

Hubby and I are passionate bush campers and have just taken to the road full-time. My problem is a delicate one. I have always found it easy to seek out a suitable place to go to the toilet whenever I needed ... up until now! Now that this is our way of life rather than a trip with a definite 'end date' I have realised I just hate using the 'facilities' in the wilds. I find myself dreading the nights because I always have to go at least once ... and I'm over it! And I hate the way I have to walk past my husband with a spade when I am going to do my business. He is so proud of me for being a bush-camping babe as he calls me that I haven't got the heart to tell him that really all I crave are the creature comforts - like

the flushing toilets - of a van park.

Alison

I'm guessing that your problem is not a unique one, Alison, and that you may actually be giving voice to the feelings of many 'bush-camping babes'. You really have no choice but to talk to your husband about how you feel. It is a biological fact that men have a far easier time of it when relieving themselves in the bush. Perhaps you could add the odd van park night into your itinerary as a treat, or you could consider getting a Portaloo for your night-time needs. Maybe hubby could step outside the van for a minute while you do the necessary. There are solutions, Alison. Do not suffer in silence.

Jaclyn

I don't wish to appear unsympathetic Alison because I'm not ... but you really need to toughen up! Having earned the respect of your husband over previous Outback trips, don't throw it away now. Can you imagine him telling your friends, the children, and everyone you meet on the road about how he loves bush camping but that you can't handle it any more. If it is the physical act of crouching that is becoming difficult for you, can I suggest a trip to a physiotherapist? Surely there are exercises you can do to build up the leg muscles. Do whatever it takes, Alison, but do not give him the satisfaction of thinking you are too old to cope.

Heidi

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QUIZ CORNER SOLVED

Pic puzzle:

**Bush fire warning
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1. Eden
2. 1770
3. Longreach
4. C) 5,990km
5. The Gibb River Rd